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PASTORAL MORAL DISCERNMENT
IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC TRADITION:
TOWARD A FOUNDATIONAL ETHIC AND CRITICAL METHOD

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Mark L. Poorman

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Committee:

William C. Spohn SJ
Dr. William C. Spohn, S.J., Director

Paul J. Philibert OP
Dr. Paul J. Philibert, O.P.

Eliane Aerts
Dr. Eliane Aerts

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ABSTRACT

My purpose in this dissertation is to develop an ethic and a method for the moral discernment which occurs in Roman Catholic pastoral settings. The thesis draws on the insight that in pastoral interactions which are concerned with moral issues and problems, the minister and the discerner actually engage in the construction of moral theology as they seek to answer the practical question, "What should I do?" In balancing, for example, beliefs, interests, emotions, situational demands, and the characters of those involved, discerners and the ministers who assist them forge common understandings and practical strategies which reflect the actual moral life of the Church. As such, I contend that those balances might serve as core sources for Catholic moral theology, not merely as necessary singularities at its periphery, where pastoral compromises and real solutions traditionally have been allowed.

Proceeding from this perspective on the critical importance of the pastoral interaction in moral matters, I attempt to move beyond the currently uneven quality of Catholic pastoral moral discernment, which ranges from

laxity to situationism to didactic authoritarianism punctuated with compassion. In the thesis, I develop an ethical base upon which Catholic pastoral moral discernment may stand and build, employing the contributions of three interactional moral theorists: psychologist Norma Haan, whose work serves as a consciously warranted empirical centerpiece of the thesis, philosopher John Macmurray and theologian James M. Gustafson. From the contributions of Haan, Macmurray and Gustafson, I formulate a composite foundational ethic.

I conclude that Catholic pastoral moral discernment should be historical in its method; multidimensional in its moral anthropology; imaginative and creative in its resolutions toward a course of action; social, relational and communal in its perspectival approach; and centered on the discerners' and ministers' relationships to God in Christ. From that normative base, I suggest practical implications and derive guidelines to which Catholic pastoral moral discernment might answer. I contrast my proposed ethic and method with those offered in the "Pastoral Directives" section of Paul VI's encyclical, Humanae Vitae.

To my parents

INTRODUCTION

In studying both traditional and contemporary Roman Catholic moral theology, I have been engaged by the often used but seldom explained distinction between "pastoral" and "moral" theology. While disciplinary custom holds that moral theology concerns itself with theological and non-theological values, teachings and objective standards for the moral life in the Roman Catholic tradition, pastoral theology concerns itself with the actual, particular and individual lives and circumstances of believers. The overlap of the two promises to be eminently helpful, and yet that common ground rarely has been mined as a source for theological reflection and renewal for either discipline.

This insight was brought home to me with its full force as I commenced doctoral studies in moral theology following four years of pastoral ministry. I discovered that the promptings of the art of pastoral care seemed to count for little in a discipline which was principally bounded by its own internal methods of determining sound argument. Likewise, those who considered themselves to be "pastoral" theologians, freshly renewed by rapprochement with therapeutic tenets of non-judgmentalism, were likewise skeptical of the value of a dialogue with moral theologians, whose enterprise was summed up well in their own shorthand

name for themselves -- "moralists." I contented myself with studying and writing about moral theology "from a pastoral point of view," attempting to interject some sense of reality in the convolutions of moral theory, and concomitantly seeking to entertain discussions of values and standards in the art of pastoral care, all the while canvassing extant theories about possible bridges between the two.

This thesis is the product of part of that work. Standing firmly in the middle of the road bordered by the traditional purviews of pastoral and moral theology, I have sought to develop an ethic and a method for the activity which necessarily draws on the two disciplines, the moral discernment which occurs in pastoral settings such as parishes, medical centers and campus ministries. After four years of practical ministerial experience in campus ministry, my deepest instincts were that the best moral theology I "did" occurred in conversational exchanges with students, faculty and staff to whose particular questions and exigencies of life I was privileged to attend. No doubt, there was an ad hoc quality to those theological reflections. Nonetheless, it seems that the integrity of moral theology has been impoverished by discounting reflections such as those as merely "pastoral" and somehow unworthy of the rigors of moral theology as it has been traditionally defined.

In this dissertation, I attempt to construct a foundational ethic and a critical method for pastoral moral discernment, the consideration of a personal situation in a Catholic ministerial setting by which a moral course of action is determined. By "foundational ethic," I mean a basic (not "foundationist" in the technical sense) composite system of values which guide the practice of pastoral moral discernment. By "critical" method, I mean a method which is informed and shaped by that foundational ethic.

Considering the broader scope of the tension between moral and pastoral theology which I have described above, this seems a limited project which looks only to the conduct of pastoral ministry as it treats moral issues and situations. In evaluating its impact and perhaps its most obvious intended audience, one could upon first glance note that pastoral ministers will appreciate the project as addressing a lacuna in Catholic pastoral practice with regard to moral guidance. Indeed, that is an important purpose for the thesis, and that aim is formulated with good reason. Much of the pastoral guidance since the decline of the manualist tradition in Catholic moral theology has been done in an uneven manner, which has been artful at its best and careless and damaging at its worst. Perhaps it is a naive hope to attempt to provide a guiding ethic and the rudiments of a method for discernment which by its very nature is too particularistic to systematize. Acknowledging that difficulty and proceeding with due moderation, I offer

the dually focused thesis in service of Catholic pastoral ministry.

As I hope to exemplify in the final chapter with Paul VI's encyclical on the regulation of birth, Humanae Vitae, the existing method of pastoral translation of moral teachings in the Catholic tradition principally has been a matter of the minister promulgating and enforcing magisterial teaching, yet allowing compassionate room for those who could not live up to the ideals of a particular teaching. This "compassionate" approach, actually reducible to the forgiveness of sins and the limiting of moral culpability through a plea bargaining of sorts, has served as the "pastoral" approach to moral problems. In the more theoretical arena, it has also served as the fundamental scheme for differentiating pastoral and moral theology.¹ As a pastoral minister convinced of the value of conversation, dialogue and exchange between persons as means of determining real and not merely best possible courses of moral action, and of engendering moral development in the process, I have sought to explore these themes with a view toward establishing a renewed Catholic pastoral moral discernment which would account for these truths.

¹ For a concise discussion of this distinction in Roman Catholic moral theology, see Richard Gula, Reason Informed By Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), pp. 306-308. See also Charles E. Curran, Directions in Fundamental Moral Theology (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), see the Chapter, "The Pastoral Minister, the Moral Demands of Discipleship and the Conscience of the Believer," pp. 257-280.

To that end, I have been attracted to the recent and original studies of Norma Haan and her associates at the Institute of Human Development at the University of California at Berkeley, who have demonstrated that skills of social interaction are highly dependable gauges of moral action and decision-making. In attempting to incorporate Haan's valuable insights into my thesis, it was necessary for me to examine the prior question of the admissibility of the empirical science of psychology as a source of ethics, a moral ground upon which to build a foundational ethic and critical method for Catholic pastoral moral discernment. In Chapter One, I set the methodological stage for admitting psychology as a source for moral reflection in the Catholic tradition, and I outline the classical psychological theories of morality. In Chapter Two, I review and critique Haan's contribution, both in relation to other psychologists of morality, and in relation to my thesis.

While Haan arrived at her interactional theory of morality through the empirical study of psychology, two other interactional moralists, John Macmurray and James G. Gustafson, came to similar conclusions through moral philosophy and theology respectively. Although Haan's empirical theories provide a novel, welcome and deliberate point of departure for the project at hand, her conclusions, which she has characterized as "thin assumptions of value," are complemented by the contributions of Macmurray and Gustafson, who maintain an interactional perspective but

accept God and Christian faith in God as centers of value. In Chapters Three and Four, I thematically discuss the collective works of Macmurray and Gustafson, drawing implications of each for pastoral moral discernment.

After explicating the three interactional theorists, in Chapter Five I commence the construction of the foundational ethic from a conversation between them, an ethic which is historical in method; multi-dimensional in moral anthropology; imaginative and creative in its resolutions toward a course for action; social, relational and communal in its perspectival approach; and centered on our relationship to God in Christ. Finally, in Chapter Six, I refer to these features of the proposed foundational ethic to draw practical implications for a critically informed method of pastoral moral discernment in the Catholic tradition. With that, the intended "limited" project of addressing a need for a guiding ethic and a critical method of moral discernment in Catholic pastoral practice is concluded.

As I hope to suggest in the course of the dissertation and especially in the final chapter, the lack of an adequate method of moral discernment in Catholic pastoral settings is a reflection of the much broader conceptual and methodological problem of "pastoral" and "moral" alluded to above, which may be witnessed not only in Roman magisterial moral theology, but in many traditional moral theologians in service to the Catholic tradition. The specific efforts in

this thesis based upon interactional theorists are to open moral discernment to other evaluative categories such as character, emotions, senses and intuitions, imagination, intellect, relationships, moral development, situation, perception and communal wisdom. These efforts are reflections of more general doubt about the ultimate adequacy of a statically conceived, objective, natural law morality from which proceeds the bulk of Catholic moral teaching and the translation of that teaching, and which is almost wholly divorced from the experience of pastoral ministers. To my knowledge, one of the first to acknowledge this fundamental difficulty and the hint of an impending paradigm shift for moral theology was Eric Doyle, who stated the following in response to an ongoing debate about the basic thrusts of moral and pastoral theology:

The most serious difficulties for an exclusively nature-based moral theology, which is concerned primarily to establish abstract, detailed, immutable and universally applicable norms, arise from the open conflict between most of the principles of this moral theology and the findings of the behavioral sciences, the pastoral experience of priests, Christian counsellors and social workers and the daily experience of a rapidly increasing number of believers in the Church. The conflict is caused chiefly because the principles of this nature-based morality deal with 'ideal', not with real people, with 'ideal' not with real situations, and because it offers no help whatever in the concrete circumstances of life in the Church and the world.²

² Eric Doyle, O.F.M., "Peaceful Reflections on the Renewal of Moral Theology," The Clergy Review 62 (October 1977): 393-401.

In his masterful history of Roman Catholic moral theology, John Mahoney makes a similar observation about the revered but relatively unexamined distinction between "pastoral" and "moral," which carries more significance than merely the ambiguity in pastoral practice. His weighty words are worthy of quoting at length:

The reluctance of moral theology, as it has developed, to incorporate the particular, and the relinquishing of the individual to 'pastoral' theology and to 'pastoral' solutions to moral dilemmas (which has also until recently prevented any healthy development of pastoral theology), may arise partly from a desire to preserve the character of moral theology as a theological science, and from a care to maintain its self-esteem as a 'hard' rather than a 'soft' science in the face of moral philosophy or ethics. And yet, as a branch of theology, the description of moral theology as a 'science' is but an analogy which is ill-used if its comparison with purely human counterparts is pushed too literally and univocally.³

Mahoney goes on to evaluate the recent efforts in Catholic moral theology to account for the particularities of "pastoral" situations:

It is interesting to note, however, how, alongside major new developments in pastoral theology, much recent work in moral theology has been at pains to explore avenues which integrate the particular into the renewal of the subject, largely stimulated by the reflection on so-called 'conflict' situations. Theories of choosing the lesser of two evils, or more positively of choosing the best in the circumstances, of compromise, of proportionality, of situated or limited freedom, and others, appear to be so many acknowledgements that moral theology cannot today simply content itself with elaborating a list of moral universals without also carefully perusing

³ John Mahoney, The Making of Moral Theology: A Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 329.

their absolute or relative character, notably when they may, or may 'appear', to come into conflict in particular⁴ situations or for particular individuals.

Mahoney's crowning insight describes well this critical juncture in the renewal of moral theology which may eventuate by relating it to the demands of pastoral situations:

It may appear, then, that various current attempts to incorporate particulars into the science of moral theology, with all the mental and systematic adjustments which that implies, is a move to throw a bridge across the gap between 'objective' and 'subjective' morality and to judge that, far more frequently than has been suspected, what diverse individuals consider God requires of them is in actual fact what God does 'objectively' require of them, as legitimate personal diversities.⁵

In light of evaluations of Catholic moral theology such as Doyle's and Mahoney's, and in keeping with my own nascent convictions that some of the best moral theology is that which is forged in the balance of "pastoral solutions," I modestly submit that what follows may serve more than the original intent of this dissertation, which was to fill a pastoral need. It may also in a limited fashion continue a certain detectable trajectory toward the renewal of Catholic moral theology which is based upon the actual lives of Christian believers, especially as those believers interact in pastoral settings for the purpose of moral discernment.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 330.

CHAPTER 1

SETTING THE METHODOLOGICAL STAGE: PSYCHOLOGY AS A SOURCE FOR ROMAN CATHOLIC MORAL REFLECTION

The established sources for Christian moral reflection are philosophy, religious tradition, sacred scripture and the experience of the believer. In Roman Catholic moral theology and especially in the official teaching of the Catholic magisterium, philosophy and tradition have been the principal sources in developing a method for ethics. At least on the part of Catholic moral theologians, and to some extent on the part of the magisterium, this basic methodological stance has begun to change in the past thirty years. Increasingly, sacred scripture as well as the collective and individual experience of believers have enjoyed some acceptance as important sources for determining areas of discernment and courses of action in the Christian moral life. This historical development is itself worthy of a detailed study which will not be attempted here. Briefly, it has to do with an incremental but certain realization that Roman Catholic ethics based strictly upon natural law philosophy and teachings promulgated by previous popes, bishops and magisteria has been found wanting in two areas. First, the role of Christian faith seemed to be minimized in a system of ethics which stressed the "natural." Second,

the applicability of Catholic ethical thought based upon a classical worldview and past Church teaching has waned in the face of contemporary situations which have demanded more comprehensive ethical considerations.

In answer to the first deficiency, Catholics have begun to appreciate and incorporate the writings of Christian ethicists whose main focus is the role of scripture in the moral life. Examples abound: Karl Barth's encounter of the commands of God in scripture,¹ H. Richard Niebuhr's interpretation of events through the lens of scripture,² Gustavo Gutierrez' focus on the liberation themes of scripture,³ and Stanley Hauerwas' careful articulation of the formation and transformation of character through the narrative accounts of scripture.⁴ While some Catholics have begun simply to appropriate these methods as alternatives to former sources, others such as Josef Fuchs and Bernard Haring have attempted a methodological dialogue between scripture and a traditional Catholic source, natural law.⁵

¹ Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics II/2, ed. by G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1957), 557.

² H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), Chapter 1.

³ Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973).

⁴ Stanley Hauerwas, A Community of Character (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

⁵ See, for example, Josef Fuchs, S.J., Natural Law: A Theological Investigation (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965) and Bernard Haring, The Law of Christ, 3 vols. (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1961-1966).

This movement of scripture into Catholic ethical reflection, begun in scholarly circles prior to Vatican II and then encouraged by the council itself,⁶ has provided a necessary and welcome shift in method which has both deepened and broadened the consideration of morality.

Response to the second deficiency noted above, the waning effectiveness of Church teaching in the face of complex contemporary situations, has been slow and uneven. Less influential than the role of scripture has been the role of experience and the systematic consideration of it in the empirical sciences. Although generations of Catholic moral theologians in the "manualist" tradition seemed to suggest by their casuistic contortions prepared for confessors that concreteness in the assessment of the moral life was all important, "experience" as such was suspect as a locus for method. As I will discuss below, ethical method for this manualist tradition really amounted to an intricate application of a deductive, syllogistic procedure which exhibited deep distrust for working inductively from experience to teaching. Moreover, either because the development of the empirical sciences was a late phenomenon relative to the tenure of the manualist tradition, or because of this ongoing distrust of the data of experience, or both, there is no evidence of a strictly empirical consideration of the human condition by the manualists. In

⁶ "Decree on Priestly Formation," The Documents of Vatican II, ed. by Walter M. Abbott (New York: Guild Press, 1966), Ch. 5, n. 16.

any case, suggestions from the ranks of empirical science regarding the nature of humanity, if indeed they were made at all, were apparently ignored by the manualist tradition, which unfortunately has defined Catholic moral thought for nearly five hundred years.

The Catholic moral anthropology as articulated by the manualist tradition, as derived from natural law did not seek the assistance of either the "hard" sciences such as biology or chemistry or the social sciences such as psychology or sociology. This has impoverished the effectiveness of moral reflection in the Catholic tradition, both in its theoretical aspects, such as the formulation of official teaching, and in a more practical aspect, the subject of this thesis, pastoral moral discernment. But experience in general and empirical science in particular, like sacred scripture previously, are indeed slowly finding places as admissible sources for Catholic moral reflection.

In this chapter, I will set a methodological stage for the discussion of a specific psychological theory of morality in the next chapter. Prior to reviewing and examining the social interactional theory of morality proposed by Norma Haan, which will serve as a theoretical cornerstone for this thesis, some groundwork needs to be laid.

Given the considerations about the Roman Catholic tradition above, it seems necessary to address two fundamental questions. First, where in the Roman Catholic

tradition might one find warrants for the use of a psychological theory of morality in proposing an ethic and method for Catholic pastoral moral discernment? Second, what do the classical psychological theories tell us about morality, i.e., how do they conceive of the moral life and its emergence in the person, what are the philosophical underpinnings of each, and what are the specific advantages and disadvantages of each theory? I will respond to the first question by examining two foundational Catholic sources for ethical method, the philosophical and theological perspective known as "natural law" and the official teaching tradition of the Church as articulated by various bodies -- the popes, bishops and sacred congregations -- the "magisterium" of the Roman Church. The first extensive task at hand, then, will be to search these two widely authorized Catholic sources for "internal" justifications for the use of psychology in determining both the shape and the content of moral reflection.

I will respond to the second question by presenting a brief summary of three classical psychological theories of morality and its development in the person: the psychoanalytic tradition as encountered in Freud and Erikson, the cognitive-constructivist theory as developed by Piaget and later expounded by Kohlberg, and the social learning tradition.

I. Natural Law, the Magisterium, and the Use of Psychology in Moral Reflection

We look first to the natural law tradition as a warrant for the use of psychology in Roman Catholic ethics and moral discernment. Why? As I have noted above, the natural law perspective has been a consistent cornerstone of Catholic moral thought, and it would seem a particularly apt place to seek a justification for the introduction of a source which as yet may be outside the principal stream of Catholic ethics. The general acceptance of the natural law tradition in Catholic circles, both in the theological and magisterial communities, allows us to look to it as a legitimating force for our purposes. As Charles Curran has noted,

[I]t must always be recalled that there is general agreement within the Roman Catholic tradition that the human plays a large role in Christian morality... The moral theology of the manuals... gave great importance to the role of the human in Christian ethics,... the teaching of the hierarchical magisterium on social matters was explained almost exclusively in terms of the natural law which is common to all mankind. In addition, those teachings which can be looked upon as most distinctively Catholic, such as the condemnation of contraception, sterilization, abortion, euthanasia, as well as the principle of the double effect, have all been based on natural law...

Beyond this conservative reason for attending to the natural law -- looking within a tradition of ethical method to admit new partners in its enterprise -- I submit that the

⁷ Charles E. Curran, "Is There a Catholic/Christian Ethic?" in Readings in Moral Theology No. 2: The Distinctiveness of Christian Ethics, ed. Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 78-79.

natural law tradition is worthy of our regard because of its basically sound insights about the sources and shape of the moral life: First, we may look to our common human living as a source for determining how we should live; second, the use of human reason in such a determination is trustworthy; and when we wish to learn or to speak about such human strivings, we will want to direct our attention not merely to our own narrow circumstances, but to a wider human audience.

But this perspective which is commonly called "natural law" is not an easy one to locate and characterize. It has endured a number of theoretical mutations through the centuries, and despite its wide acceptance in Catholic thought as a basis for method, there is much to be settled in regard to its actual constitution. In fact, as I will note below, by a previous understanding of natural law within Church circles, it would be safe to say that empirical science would have been excluded from the purview of ethical reflection.

The fundamental contention of natural law is that we may know what we should do by attending to human nature. As such, it would seem that empirical science, a systematic consideration of life as we know it, would be a fitting partner in attending to that nature. Curran summarizes the relationship:

...[T]he coalition of Catholic theology with rational Greek philosophy shows the openness of such theology to the insights of reason and the sciences. A theology which is open to insights of

reason is thus in principle open to the data of science...The judgments of reason do depend upon sense data as a starting point so that empirical data should enter into the final intellectual judgment about the order implanted by God in the universe.⁸

The stress in the natural law perspective upon reason and experience is the perfect window for the admission of empirical science. But this is a reflection on a broader view of natural law. Unfortunately, certain philosophical and theological interpretations of natural law have narrowed the notion, especially in the Catholic tradition. More recently, there have been attempts to recover the rich dimensions of this theory, and it will be a revised notion of natural law to which we will eventually appeal for our foundation. In order to fully appreciate the tradition as a whole, its attendant difficulties over the years, and the contributions of the revisions of it, we now turn to a discussion of the conceptual evolution of natural law within the Catholic tradition, paying particular attention to it as a legitimating base upon which empirical science as a methodological source may rest.

Greco-Roman Origins

The notion of natural law can be traced to classical Greek culture, which gave to it one of its eminent characteristics, the description of the human condition by way of ideal forms. The Greeks conceived of the manifold

⁸ Charles E. Curran, Catholic Moral Theology in Dialogue (Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1972), 67.

differences of human beings as merely accidental ones which were exceptions to the ideal state of humanity. Humanity in turn was one part of an overall reality which was ordered, complete and unchanging.

The basic premise of natural law, given these two contentions, was that human beings in their many expressions ought to live according to a single ideal form which was predicated upon an unchanging reality. Failure to align oneself with this ideal form and its predicating reality resulted in tragedy, well documented, for example, in Greek plays such as Antigone. Human will and intention predictably played volatile roles in this conception. When such intentions were in league with the givenness of reality, order would prevail and happiness would ensue. When one sought to order life differently than it had been divinely ordained, one would suffer the consequences.

Douglas Sturm outlines features of this Greek mindset which are central to the development of the natural law tradition and which are particularly germane to our eventual discussion of the Christian appropriation of the tradition: First, this was an organic, rather than a mechanistic mindset. That is, all things fit together into a living whole and each part derived its entire definition from the fact that it was a part of a greater reality, not a thing unto itself. Consequently, all things in the universe possessed innate tendencies governed by the larger, well-ordered reality. Second, it was a mindset which took as its

point of departure the human, rather than the divine, as is witnessed by the Greeks' anthropocentric obsession in their poetry, their sculpture and painting, and their gods.⁹ In short, according to Sturm, "It is an understanding of reality that is naturalistic, humanistic, immanentistic and non-historical."¹⁰ Moreover, as O'Connell has pointed out, in this conception, human participation in the universe is largely passive, with the particular moral challenge being the "obligation (perceived by reason) to conform to nature."¹¹

The ancient Roman influence on the development in the natural law tradition is divided into two major movements. The general tendency in the Roman influence was toward the "law" aspect of natural law. Unlike the Greeks, the Romans were not so completely wedded to the notion that conformity to a static cosmos constituted the moral obligation which one had to follow in life. Instead, Romans celebrated human activity, reason and creativity as sources for moral determinations, thus stressing the distinctively human as

⁹ Sturm cites Werner Jaeger's "massive, detailed and classical study," Paideia, the Ideals of Greek Culture, Vol. I, Second edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), introduction.

¹⁰ Douglas Sturm, "Naturalism, Historicism, and Christian Ethics: Toward a Christian Doctrine of Natural Law," The Journal of Religion 44 (1964), 40-51.

¹¹ Timothy E. O'Connell, Principles for a Catholic Morality (Minneapolis: Seabury, 1978), 137. O'Connell creates this shorthand description as a condensation of Delhay, Troisfontaine, Rahner and Ryan's agreement that two strains in natural law thinking exist.

that which was reasonable. Reason itself was natural, and the exercise of it was the necessary agreement with nature which was mandated by "natural law."

For the Romans, then, "what [was] natural [was] right reason, human intelligence, prudent and thoughtful action directed to humane ends. Here no abject capitulation to the facts of life."¹² Indeed, this active notion of the natural law is what we find in Cicero and in Gaius, who gave us the terms jus civile, the law which is particular to a given society or collective, and jus gentium, the more generic law which governs all peoples. The major exception to this basic Roman perspective was the philosopher Ulpian, who further distinguished a jus naturale, a natural law which was more akin to the Greek notion of natural law, described by Ulpian as a "rule of action common to man and all the animals." By introducing animals into the picture, Ulpian effectively described humanity as one more species which was subject, like the animals, to the rules of the natural world. Gone was the notion of the distinctiveness of humanity based upon the right exercise of reason and prudence. Instead, Ulpian and those influenced by him "saw the natural law as the demand placed upon human beings to be what they are, to conform themselves to the facts of life, to accept themselves and their fate, to be docile fellow-animals in the world."¹³ Ulpian's contribution to natural

¹² Ibid., 135.

¹³ Ibid., 136.

law theory becomes critical as we later examine his influence on various medieval sources, the most prominent of those being Thomas Aquinas. Specifically, we will be interested in two major implications of Ulpian's amendment of the Roman tradition with a return to Greek categories. First, as "nature" becomes equated with that which we share with the animals and not with our use of reason, there is introduced into basic moral anthropology a two-tiered understanding of "human:" Curran describes the theoretical snag well:

A top layer of rationality is merely added to an already constituted bottom layer of animality. The union between the two layers is merely extrinsic -- the one lies on top of the other.¹⁴

The extrinsic quality of reason in turn accentuates the definition of the "animality," such that the various features of animality, that is, simple biological processes, become major criteria for what is natural:

The animal layer retains its own finalities and tendencies, independent of the demands of rationality. Thus the individual may not interfere in the animal processes and finalities... Ulpian's notion of nature easily leads to a morality based on the finality of a faculty independent of any considerations of the total human person or the total human community.¹⁵

As we shall see later, the "finalities" and "tendencies" in animal life become critical points of reference as others develop these into physical "faculties"

¹⁴ Charles E. Curran, Directions in Fundamental Moral Theology (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 130.

¹⁵ Ibid., 130-131.

from which we draw our cues about the moral life.

Augustine, for example, capitalized on the two-tier notion of nature, stressing along with the Greeks and Ulpian the necessity to be aware of the division in humanity between the lower dictates of animality and the higher promptings of human reason. He mediates the two through his well-known concept of "right ordering" of the things of the universe:

...when reason controls the movement of the soul, man is said to be ordered. For it is not a right order or even to be called order¹⁶ at all, when the better is subject to the worse.

Or, as Mahoney summarizes the principal contribution of Augustine in this regard, a contribution which will have lasting impact on Catholic appropriation of natural law theory in moral theology,

All the things which God has created are good, and so the rational soul acts well with reference to them if it maintains order, and if by distinguishing, choosing, and assessing, it subordinates the lesser things to the greater, the bodily to the spiritual, the lower¹⁷ to the higher and the temporal to the eternal.

Thomas Aquinas

In classical moral theology, Aquinas enjoys a referential credibility which is unparalleled. His work not only represents a highly indicative sample of the efforts of scholastic theology, it has consistently served as an important foundation for theological study since its

¹⁶ Augustine, De lib. arb., 1, 8, 18; PL 32, 1231, as cited by John Mahoney, The Making of Moral Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 75.

¹⁷ Mahoney, 75.

composition in the thirteenth century. Increasingly, it has become important that his notion of natural law be accurately portrayed, especially as we consider the later influence of the manualist tradition, which claimed Aquinas as its primary architect. An adequate treatment of the whole of Aquinas' evolving theory of natural law cannot be presented here.¹⁸ Suffice it to say for our present purposes that what is at stake in investigating Thomas' conception of the natural law is whether he would admit the typically Roman role of reason in natural law, or whether he sought to portray the natural law in terms of the Greek notion of a completed universe to which we must conform through the use of reason. In short, we are trying to determine if Thomas has a proclivity toward the "order of reason" or toward the "order of nature" as I have described it above. Whereas the former would readily admit the value of experience (and, by extrapolation, its systematic formulation in empirical science) in the discernment of the moral life, the latter would be more skeptical of such an admission, being more comfortable with a static worldview which presents all the precepts humans need to know.

Both Timothy O'Connell and Charles Curran note that Aquinas' writings reveal a grounding in both strains of the

¹⁸ For a succinct description of background information on Thomas' development of a moral theology, see Albert R. Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin, The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), Chapter 6, pp. 122-136.

natural law tradition.¹⁹ In Part I-II, Question 94, Article 2, we find in passages which are adjacent to each other the following explanations of the constitution of natural law:

...there is in man an inclination to things that pertain to him more specially, according to that nature which he has in common with other animals: and in virtue of this inclination, those things are said to belong to the natural law, which nature has taught to all animals, such as sexual intercourse, education of offspring and so forth.²⁰

Aquinas adds as his next point of answering this second article of Question 94, "Of the Natural Law,"

...there is in man an inclination to good, according to the nature of his reason, which nature is proper to him: thus man has a natural inclination to know the truth about God and to live in society: and in this respect, whatever pertains to this inclination belongs to the natural law.²¹

Thomas derives his notion of natural law from both strains, stating that human fulfillment lies in an end which has been created for us by God, an end toward which we tend, both by inclinations which we share with animals and all creation, and by inclinations which we distinctively possess by reason.

Other observations are worthy of note in this discussion of the Thomistic formulation of natural law, particularly as we later consider the manualist

¹⁹ See, for example, O'Connell, Ch. 13 and Curran, Directions in Fundamental Moral Theology, Ch. 5.

²⁰ Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Volume I (New York: Benzinger Brothers, Inc., 1947), Pt. I-II, Q. 94, Article 2, p. 1009.

²¹ Ibid.

appropriation of it. Although evidence may be readily supplied to demonstrate Thomas' ambivalence about the ascendancy of the "order of reason" or the "order of nature," we get several glimpses of the Thomistic formulation as one which is at least quite accommodating to the order of reason.

First, Thomas' use of Aristotle in his conception of the moral life suggests an approval of the order of reason. Prescinding from the issue of the use of what was at the time a contemporary source (thus suggesting an openness to the development of thought which ran counter to the ahistorical quality of the classical order of nature)²², the order of reason seems to receive structural support from Aristotelian thought as a foundation for natural law. Human life was not most keenly described by comparison with the faculties of animals, but by attending to the special qualities allowed by reason. David Knowles and Dimitri Obolensky describe the effect of Thomas' use of Aristotle on Christian theology. By it, they note:

²² This, too, becomes very important in our later discussion of the classical worldview vs. the historical worldview. With the incorporation of Aristotle as a contemporary source in his thesis about the moral life, Thomas was much more open to the historical development of thought than some would give him credit. Aquinas' use of Aristotle constitutes a dialogue with thought patterns current in his world which suggests a deep appreciation of new approaches to the moral life. Curran points out the irony of Thomistic thought being employed by church hierarchy in the last two centuries for the exact opposite purpose -- to establish a "perennial philosophy." See Charles E. Curran, New Perspectives in Moral Theology (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 45-46.

He was thus able to give an absolute value to human activity and human politics and social life, and to vindicate the autonomy, within its own sphere, of human thought.²³

Second, Thomas had a refined notion of the role of prudence in the moral life. The centrality of this virtue again suggests the prominence of reason and, more importantly, that living the moral life requires a rigorous discernment, not merely an assent to the promptings of pre-programmed faculties:

Now man is suitably directed to his due end by a virtue which perfects the soul in the appetitive part, the object of which is the good and the end. And to that which is suitably ordained to the due end, man needs to be rightly disposed by a habit in his reason, because counsel and choice, which are about things ordained to the end, are acts of the reason. Consequently, an intellectual virtue is needed in the reason, to perfect the reason, and make it suitably affected towards things ordained to the end; and this virtue is prudence. Consequently, prudence is necessary to lead a good life.²⁴

Finally, and very germane to our later discussion about the role of experience and empirical science in moral discernment, Thomas left plenty of space for arriving at different conclusions to moral dilemmas, based upon his contention that as one proceeds from the primary principles of natural law to more specific ones, as one approaches the concrete situation at hand, numerous courses of action emerge as possible ones:

²³ David Knowles and Dimitri Obolensky, The Christian Centuries, Vol.II, The Middle Ages (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1978), 363.

²⁴ Aquinas, Summa, Pt. I-II, Q. 57, Article 5, p. 831.

Consequently we must say that the natural law, as to general principles, is the same for all, both as to rectitude and as to knowledge. But as to certain matters of detail, which are conclusion, as it were, of those general principles, it is the same for all in the majority of cases, both as to rectitude and as to knowledge; and yet in some few cases it may fail...²⁵

Such modesty in claims about the comprehensiveness of the natural law in serving all aspects of the moral life seems to imply an admission of latitude of conclusions in moral discernment which, as we shall see, was ignored by the manualists. But more for our present purposes, it is enough to note that right reason is integral to Thomas Aquinas' articulation of the natural law tradition.

The "Manualist" Tradition

Moral theology was fairly dominated by the writings of Thomas Aquinas for centuries. Within the medieval and renaissance universities, his thought was granted wide distribution and acceptance. The parts of the Summa devoted to moral theology (I-II and II-II) prompted a number of commentaries on the content of Thomas' thoughts on the moral life, which were intimately connected to his systematic theology and which were teleologically based on one's eventual life with God, the relationship between nature and grace, habits and the virtues. It is important to note that Thomas maintained a careful unity in his reflections on the moral life, i.e., all was confluent with the rest of his theology.

²⁵ Ibid., 1011.

The unity and cohesiveness of Thomas' moral theology was minimized and even abandoned by succeeding commentators and and theorists.²⁶ Of special significance were the followers of William of Ockham and the movement of Nominalism, who have been cited as the source of a new fragmentation in moral theology. According to Bernard Haring's assessment:

...the Ockhamists were responsible for the fateful decline in moral theology. At the fountainhead of the development of the moral theology of the fourteenth century is the baneful metaphysics of William of Ockham. The fundamental intuition of nominalism is the unique value of the singular, the individual. The only true reality is the individual. Only the particular man, the human individual, really exists.²⁷

Here were the metaphysical underpinnings required to underplay or abandon Thomas' sound intuitions about habits informed by reason in favor of an analysis of individual acts driven by will. On the heels of the influence of the Ockhamists, the publication of penitential books, manuals designed for the use of a confessor in advising penitents about particular acts, flourished. Of these, the manual published by St. Antoine was highly influential in the shaping of many manuals which were to follow.²⁸

²⁶ For a history of developments in casuistry following scholastic formulations of the moral life, see Jonsen and Toulmin, Chapters 6-8.

²⁷ Bernard Haring, The Law of Christ (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1963), 14.

²⁸ Ibid., 16.

A Thomistic revival of the sixteenth century provided some antidote to the increasingly act-oriented considerations of moral theology, but the unified features of Thomas' theology were not recovered. Instead, a lasting split occurred between the speculative quality of Thomas' systematic theology and the commentaries on his moral theology. Although a number of different types of commentaries on the Summa were born during this period, several historical conditions allowed for the prominence of those which stressed the practical, not the least of which was the Counter-Reformation and its concern with justification and free will (and a reinforcement of a preoccupation with acts) and the importance of the sacrament of penance as outlined by the Council of Trent.²⁹

The preparation of confessors was the goal of the manuals of moral theology, some more comprehensive than the earlier penitential manuals, but still very much engaged by the practical problems of settling the conscience of the penitent. As a further means of providing explicit answers to questions of conscience, canon law was assimilated by these manuals and played a significant role in the consideration of matrimony and penance.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, moral theology continued in the vein of manuals, laws and cases of conscience, as a separate enterprise from systematic and dogmatic theology. In an effort to hone the abilities of

²⁹ Ibid., 18.

theologians and confessors, methods for adjudicating "doubtful" consciences were developed. Jansenists rejected any casuistry, always insisting on the strictest standards for conduct. Laxists, on the other hand, favored a great deal of liberty in cases of conscience. In the middle were probabilists, who favored a lenient opinion held by even one theologian, the equiprobabilists, who taught that the conflicting opinions should be held by an equal number of experts, and probabiliorists, who required that a lenient opinion must be held by a majority of experts.

The manualist tradition continued in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, weathering a conflict between German and Italian moral theologians (settled by Pius IX's intervention, A Syllabus of Errors). Toward mid-twentieth century, some attempts to accentuate a more integrated approach to the moral life surfaced through the inclusion of scripture or patristics,³⁰ but no substantive changes in the preparation of confessional ministry occurred, so that the legal paradigm endured, even through the 1950's, and priests and seminarians continued to study such classics as Heribert Jone and Dominic Prummer as the keys to moral theology. McBrien summarizes well the methodological approach of the manualists:

The emphasis was on the individual act to determine whether or not it fell into the category of sin, and if so, whether it was mortal or

³⁰ See Haring, pp. 23-33 for a complete listing of these moral theologians and their basic theories and methods.

venial. Stress was still placed on obedience to the law: divine law, natural law, human law. Therefore, conformity with law is the fulfillment of the good. Analysis of moral action still tended to abstract from the concrete circumstances and situation of the moral actor. The manuals in use...were based on an understanding³¹ of an essentially unchanging human nature.

How, then, might we evaluate this interpretation of the natural law tradition by the manualists and the ensuing neo-scholastic revival of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? Generally speaking, this interpretation of the natural law tradition has been the most enduring and pervasive one in the Catholic tradition. The Counter-Reformation translation of Thomistic natural law has served as the core of moral theology for four centuries, and its influence on Catholic thought and life cannot be underestimated. In our efforts to admit experience and empirical science into the currency of Catholic moral reflection, it is the manualist tradition of natural law which presents the most resistance. Efforts to renew or revise the Catholic natural law tradition in the wake of the vast influence of the manualists provide the rationale for experiential sources such as psychology in Catholic moral reflection. As such, we do well first to examine the features of this manualist notion of natural law, and later to note reform movements which criticize this interpretation and, in their various revisions, welcome the insights which experience and empirical science can contribute.

³¹ Richard P. McBrien, Catholicism (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1980), 933.

Perhaps the most salient feature of the manualist notion of natural law morality is its election of a classicist rather than an historicist worldview.³² Lonergan describes these as two "apprehensions" of the person, moral anthropologies which adequately summarize a host of theological foundations for the consideration of the nature of humanity.

In the classicist worldview, accent is placed upon the conservative, traditional and abstract, and it is generally concerned with properties verifiable in every person. "Human" and "natural" are abstractions which are unchanging. With this worldview, there is no exigence for changing forms, structures or methods because all change is in the concrete, and in this view the concrete is always omitted. (As we will note later, Lonergan does not consider this worldview as congenial to a theological understanding of humanity, precisely because it does not consider the concrete circumstances of life. The suggestion is that God is only active in structures and forms, but not events.)

In the historicist apprehension, stress is placed upon the modern and the liberal, ratified in the desertion if not the repudiation of old models and methods, as well as the exercise of freedom, creativity and initiative. I quote at

³² For a further elaboration of the following discussion, see Bernard Lonergan, S.J., "A Transition from a Classicist Worldview to Historical Mindedness," in Law for Liberty: The Role of Law in the Church Today, ed. James E. Beicher (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1967), 126-133.

length this seminal insight about the importance of the historical quality of human life:

...a concrete aggregate developing over time where the locus of development and, so to speak, the synthetic bond of emergence, expansion, differentiation, dialectic of meaning and meaningful performance. On this view intentionality, meaning, is a constitutive component of human living; moreover, this component is not fixed, static, immutable, but shifting, developing, going astray, capable of redemption; on this view, there is in historicity, which results from human nature, an exigence for changing forms, structures, methods; and it is on this level and through this medium of changing meaning that divine revelation has entered the world and that the Church's witness is given to it.³³

With regard to our immediate concern here, in its articulation of what was to be "natural," the manualist tradition was first and foremost classicist in its moral anthropology. It was in large part a closed, monolithic system which proceeded from timeless principles about human life and behavior, and embraced a deductive, a priori method,³⁴ whereas the historical worldview, attending to the particular and the concrete, is inductive and a posteriori in its method. The historical understanding

³³ Ibid., 130.

³⁴ Jonsen and Toulmin would take issue with this assessment, noting that there is evidence in the period of "high casuistry" for both the use of principles, maxims and rules as well as the use of practical judgment about the applicability of these to particular cases. See pp. 256 ff. of The Abuse of Casuistry...

would quite openly allow for experience as a critical source for moral reflection; the classicist would not.³⁵

A second feature of the manualist conception of natural law is that it placed natural law at the virtual center of an overarching legal paradigm for the moral life. Although the starting point of the manuals of moral theology was the "end" of humanity -- life with God -- the "means" toward that end, laid out in amazing detail, was the submission to laws of all kinds. It is indicative that in one representative work, Handbook of Moral Theology, by Dominic Prummer, O.P., in the introductory treatises, "human acts" merits nineteen pages of coverage, "conscience" nine pages, "virtues in general" two pages and "law" thirty-one pages! In this well known conception, natural law was "the rational creature's participation in the eternal law, which was "the divine reason or will³⁶ commanding the preservation of the natural law and forbidding its disturbance." Natural law further gave birth to divine and human law, which

³⁵ For an excellent discussion of the implications of the historicist and classicist worldviews for Catholic moral theology and its development, see Curran, New Perspectives, 137ff.

³⁶ The difference between divine reason or will is not unimportant. As O'Connell has noted, if natural law is a function of divine reason, then it represents "one aspect of that exercise of divine wisdom that is the shape of creation itself," whereas if it is the divine will, it is a matter of humans responding to the will of God as they would a medieval monarch, and it thus strengthens the legal analogy. See O'Connell, 121.

explicitated the secondary precepts of the natural law.³⁷ The eventual conflation of moral theology and canon law only added strength to this exaggerated legal paradigm which used natural law as its centerpiece.

The third noteworthy feature of the manualist notion of natural law is that, consistent with the elaborate legal paradigm, individual human acts took on an undue importance as indicators of compliance or noncompliance with natural law and, therefore, Catholic morality. The obsession with violation, ignorance, intention, penalties and censures, for example, reveal an act-mentality which may be rooted in either the Ockhamist development or the earlier influence of Ulpian on Thomas. The general fascination with the physical structure of the act as the indicator of moral culpability led to another feature of the manualist purchase on natural law, a disposition toward "biologism" and "physicalism." Indeed, such natural law-as-physicalism has endured in official statements of Church moral teaching even to present times.³⁸

The singular focus of the act-mentality in turn led to a mistaken notion that to be in harmony with natural law was to avoid one's own transgressions of it. Consequently, the manualist notion of morality and what was "natural" was

³⁶ See Dominic M. Prummer, O.P., Handbook of Moral Theology (New York: P.J. Kenedy and Sons, 1957), 27-58.

³⁸ See, for example, the methodology often employed in the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics, 9: AAS 68 (1976).

individualistic rather than social. The only relationship with which one need be concerned is that with God, which could be maintained (ever so logically) through participation in eternal law, i.e., action according to natural and positive laws which were borne out of it. Moreover, because of this disinterest in relationality, there was little attention afforded the qualities of the moral agent or the circumstances surrounding an act. This general disdain for the subjective precipitated a conception of natural law morality which was objective both in its commands and the determination of its transgressions. If there were some difficulty in determining fault, confessors were trained to act as prosecutor, defense attorney and judge for a system which encouraged passivity on the part of lay Catholics and ecclesiastical positivism on the part of clerics charged with promulgating and interpreting the natural law.

Finally, as one may infer from the above features of the manualist tradition, there was a selective use of Thomas Aquinas as a foundation for later developments of this system. Absent, for example, is Thomas' critical discussion of the relationship of nature and grace. Indeed, grace as an element of the moral life seemed quite absent from the manuals. Their concentration on the human acts as a means of participating in divine life shifted the focus to the quality of those acts and away from the divine life inherent in the human condition. Additionally, Thomas' ambivalence

about the order of reason and the order of nature seems to have disappeared in the manualist conception of natural law. The Greek (and Ulpian's) propensity for the order of nature and their influence on Thomas seem to have been highlighted, the result being a diminution of the role of reason.

Revisions of the Natural Law Tradition and the Role of Empirical Science

In this final section of our discussion of the natural law tradition as a warrant for the use of empirical science in Christian moral reflection, I wish to turn to some theoretical movements within philosophy and theology which basically prize the natural law insights about morality, but also offer some revisions as "friendly amendments." These amendments stand to revitalize the tradition in general, and they are particularly amenable to the admission of empirical data in morality. As we shall see, most of their suggested revisions are directed toward the manualist conception of natural law as I have outlined it above.

One major concern is the ahistorical quality of the natural law system as it has been promulgated in the Greek/Ulpian/manualist strain. This criticism takes many forms, but one principal theological insight, perhaps best articulated by Karl Rahner, is sufficient for our purposes. This is the notion that an immutable human nature runs directly counter to Christian faith and theology, which are rooted in an historical phenomenon --the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That revelation, as

well as faith in it and theological reflection on it, are all historical expressions, and the Christian is immersed in a real, concrete salvation history which continues and which makes the Christian not merely an object of fate, but a subject in that history.³⁹ This is not to say that there is a hopeless divorce between the natural law and Christian traditions. Sturm points out that, quite to the contrary, there is a foundational connection between the historical approach of Christianity and the classicist approach of natural law:

Christ is the restoration of the true image of man, because he is the incarnation of the love which is the meaning of our existence...With the coming of Christ...is an effective disclosure in action of what the attitude and purpose and character of God always was, always is and always will be. Thus the God of our redemption is the same as the God of our creation.⁴⁰

The admission of historical dynamism into the natural law perspective is perhaps the most important and comprehensive revision of all. It carries with it several other implications. First, the admission of historicity into the natural law perspective allows that one may turn less to the cosmos and more to the person for the basis of moral reflection. That is, if the human person is not merely a pawn of predetermined nature but is actually an agent of change and "creative of human history" as Rahner would have it, then "natural" morality may be conceived in

³⁹ Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations, Volume VI (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, Ltd., 1974) See pp. 43-45 and 52-57.

⁴⁰ Sturm, 122-123.

any number of ways as the response of the human person to life as he or she understands it.

In the past, this subjective feature of morality has been obliquely addressed in theories such as Philip Keane's premoral and moral evil or Bernard Haring's development of "invincible ignorance," both of which sought to keep intact the objective moral order of natural law while acknowledging the way "real people" acted. For other theologians more directly concerned with the moral subject, that response might be the "fundamental option" of Rahner or "relational responsibility" of Niebuhr, for example. For philosophers, it might be the categorical imperative of Kant or the relationality of Macmurray. Because of this concern with the subject or agent which an historicized natural law perspective will allow, other disciplines which describe that moral response -- sociology, anthropology and psychology, for example -- will likewise be granted warrants for admission as sources of moral reflection. Their study and description of the concrete aspects of human behavior will not be viewed in opposition to a monolithic, all-encompassing philosophical system, but will be respected as sources of moral anthropology on their own terms, even if they will be supported by a (revised) natural law approach to Christian moral reflection. In contrast to the Church's traditional use of natural law as a "closed system" which could explain all features of human life,

...philosophy must admit that it never adequately captures man's total experience, and therefore,

cannot be its totalitarian sovereign...For theology has to do primarily with history and the future. While philosophy can consider historicity and orientation toward the future only formally, the sciences⁴¹ focus on the content of history and the future.

Another implication of the admission of historicity is that it calls into question whether the regular division by the manualists between "natural" and "supernatural" is at all acceptable. This division, which may be much more Augustinian than Thomistic in origin and which was accentuated by post-Tridentine scholasticism,⁴² ignores the theological truth that "there is a supernatural element to nature itself as it historically exists, to which moral theology, with its long indebtedness to Stoic and Aristotelian ways of thinking has not given its attention."⁴³ To embrace history, circumstance, concrete situations and experience as incarnational loci of God's activity and not merely as accidents in a pre-determined plan for creation is to welcome them and scientific

⁴¹ See Rahner, Theological Investigations, Volume IX (New York: Herder and Herder, first published 1972), pp. 69. 71-72.

⁴¹ See John Mahoney's excellent outline of the history of "nature and supernature," Chapter 3, The Making of Moral Theology. Moran condenses the history of this dichotomy as follows: For Aquinas, it was a nature open to fulfillment by grace, for Reformation and Counter-Reformation theologians, it was nature and grace in juxtaposition, and for 20th century theologians such as Rahner and deLubac, "...grace that is beyond experience bears strong resemblance to no grace at all." See Gabriel Moran, No Ladder to the Sky (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 88-90.

⁴³ Mahoney, 112.

articulations of them into partnership with theological reflection. Rahner concludes:

It is precisely expressions of faith (and thus theology) in respect of man which must by their very nature involve themselves above all in man's historical situation. This means dialogue with and within this situation in so far as the latter has itself been the object of scientific and theoretical reflection; it also means courage to become involved with the unreflected situation, accepting it and speaking from within it in the Christian hope that the truth of God, which must needs be expressed, will not -- by the Spirit of God -- be substantially corrupted (either objectively or subjectively by being expressed from within the particular historical situation, even when unaccompanied by a final and transparent confirmation as to the legitimacy of the historical situation. It is obvious from this point of view that a complete, self-enclosed theological system is an absurdity.⁴⁴

Other revisions of the natural law perspective do not have as their central concern the lack of historicity in former conceptions but use other points of departure. These revisions, too, assist in providing the warrant we seek.

An ongoing criticism of natural law is its poor accounting for the reality of human sin. Often coming from Protestant circles, the contention is that we ought not rely upon human reason to discern a moral course of action, as reason is significantly flawed by the presence of sin.⁴⁵ As Curran has noted, "Sin relativizes and affects all reality.

⁴⁴ Rahner, Theological Investigations, Volume IX, pp. 72-73.

⁴⁵ Note two discussions of the role of sin in natural law thinking: James M Gustafson, Protestant and Roman Catholic Ethics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 63, and Curran, Directions in Fundamental Moral Theology, 123 ff.

How often has reason been used to justify human prejudice and ignorance. Natural law has been appealed to in the denials of human dignity and of religious liberty."⁴⁶ There is no question that one of the great assets of natural law, the use of reason, can also be its most acute liability. But the danger resides in the exaltation of reason to the exclusion of other spiritual realities,⁴⁷ and to the exclusion of other human capacities. Accordingly, it is much in the interest of discovering the role of these other human capacities that one would include the contributions of social sciences, which have as their focus the forces underlying human behavior -- motivation, affection and socialization, for example. The criticism, then, is well taken. But while some Christian ethicists look to Scripture as the countervailing source, and others look to a broadened spiritual "stance," the proposed revision may be pointing toward a more comprehensive consideration of "natural" in the human condition, an invitation to abandon overly rationalistic views of human functioning and to incorporate the apprehensions of empirical knowledge. They may not explain human sinfulness, but while respecting the

⁴⁶ Curran, Directions In Fundamental Moral Theology, 123.

⁴⁷ Curran's discussion of the "stance" of Roman Catholic moral theology addresses this problem well. He notes that method should include creation, sin, incarnation, redemption and resurrection. Directions in Fundamental Moral Theology, 5.

fundamental thrust of natural law, they may admit some insight into the effects of sin on the moral life.

A wholesale criticism of the natural law tradition is that which is often brought forward by analytic philosophers as the critique of the "naturalistic fallacy." By it, one makes the claim that an "ought," i.e., values, cannot be derived from the description of an "is," i.e., the qualities, of a thing.⁴⁸ The refutation of this criticism, which goes to the heart of naturalistic ethics and would fill volumes in its exposition, would itself require extended discussion; it is not my intention to attempt it here. I cite one tack in the refutation which is important and helpful to our discussion. Gabriel Moran makes the case that in the natural law perspective, we are not looking for a single course of moral action, but what constitutes responsibility to many aspects of the universe, and there are a number of appropriate responses. So we study not what we ought to do, but what we ought not to do. In the end, we emerge with the contention that what is unnatural (rather than what is non-natural) is what is immoral. As for committing the fallacy, then, Moran comments, "As for evaluation, moral issues are not resolved by counting. Nevertheless, a knowledge of how people actually behave is preferable to ignorance when

⁴⁸ See G.E. Moore, Principia Ethica (London: Cambridge University press, 1971), Ch. 1, B., R.M. Hare, The Language of Morals (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), Ch. 5. For a criticism of Moore's theory, see G.C. Field, Moral Theory (London: Methuen, 1921), Ch. 5.

making moral evaluations."⁴⁹ In seeking to know the unnatural, we may do well to understand the "counting" offered to us in the empirical sciences.

Finally, we look to a contemporary "revisionist" who directly incorporates the empirical into the natural law tradition, beyond the "suggestions" of the role of the empirical encountered above. John Milhaven, whose theories are much maligned because of their rather strict consequentialism, nonetheless has made a strong case for the role of empiricism in the "best of the tradition." Noting that most discussions in Roman Catholic (natural law) circles surround the purpose of certain faculties and then proceed to derive the moral value of such faculties from their determined purpose, he raises the question of how general the discussion of purpose should be. That is, should we talk of things detracting from or contributing to a general purpose for human life, such as a life of understanding and love for self and neighbor, or should we talk of the particular purpose of the faculties of speech or sex, for example? In either case, we determine the moral quality of things in two ways. Either the act lacks some inherently valued trait such as love, honor or compassion, or it is wrong because of its consequences, usually designated as "what generally happens" by Milhaven. Discerning the first, he contends, is difficult because

⁴⁹ Gabriel Moran, No Ladder to the Sky: Education and Morality (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 93-95.

direct insight is not possible in most cases. In the second case, then, what is needed is evidence to find "what generally happens," and this evidence is best offered by empirical science.⁵⁰ Milhaven's distillation, although simplistic in tone, represents an early effort to follow up on the promptings of Vatican II church teaching, which we will discuss in the next section.

The Evolving Perspective within the Magisterial Tradition

We now look to the official Roman Catholic magisterium to provide a second warrant for the use of psychology in moral reflection. The story of the evolution of the ethical method employed by the magisterium is largely a story which follows the contours of the discussion above. That is, although we are seeking a warrant from another widely authorized Catholic source -- "tradition" -- that tradition itself is historically dominated by the use of natural law as its foundation. Moreover, the development of the natural law perspective within this teaching tradition may be roughly outlined by reviewing the features of a revised natural law, some of which I have discussed above: a shift from a classical to an historical worldview, with an accompanying turn toward the subject and away from the cosmos for cues about moral anthropology; a virtual elimination of the clear distinction between "natural" and

⁵⁰ John G. Milhaven, Toward a New Catholic Morality (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), Ch. 9.

"supernatural," based on a more incarnational theology; an incorporation of human sin and its various descriptions into the discussion of the role of reason in natural law; a conscious appreciation rather than an apology for the "naturalistic fallacy" which supports the natural law perspective; and the actual assimilation of the findings of empirical science in moral discernment.

In the discussion which is to follow, I will look to several representative teachings from the Catholic magisterial tradition in order to cite the evolving admissibility of empirical science as a source in ethical reflection. The documentation is drawn from various sources which assist in generating the body of teachings known as "magisterial" statements: papal encyclicals on social and personal ethics, documents from the Second Vatican Council, a papal apostolic exhortation, and a statement from the "Holy Office," presently the Congregation for the Faith. As I am interested in demonstrating a warrant from the widest possible authority, I have not discussed bishop's individual and conference statements, which I believe demonstrate well the admissibility of empirical science in moral reflection. I have arranged the discussion around four of the features of the revision of natural law, which, as I have noted above, pave the way for admission of empirical science in general and psychology in particular.

A Classicist vs. Historicist Worldview

The first feature of revised natural law which is evidenced in the magisterial tradition is the shift from the classicist to historicist worldview. This move from a static, complete, hierarchically ordered universe to one which attaches importance to the actual events of history as indicative of God's life among us is accompanied by a necessarily changed moral anthropology. When human history assumes importance as a moral indicator, then persons are viewed not as cogs in the machinery of the predetermined cosmos, but as agents who are in the midst of discovering the depths of themselves and the world. Change and development are not accidental but substantial; as such, the study of change and development becomes exceedingly significant, as do the data of the physical, biological and social sciences. Evidence of such a shift may be found by comparing the body of encyclicals written by Leo XIII with later pope's letters, culminating in Paul VI's Octogesima Adveniens. For the bulk of this discussion, as well as the subsequent on the turn toward the moral subject, I am indebted to Charles Curran's insightfully developed thesis regarding the changing anthropology and method in Catholic social ethics.⁵¹

⁵¹ Charles Curran, Directions in Catholic Social Ethics (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1985). See Chapters 1 and 2 for full discussions of both the changing anthropological bases and methods in the body of Catholic social teaching.

Leo XIII's view of the society-state (he makes no distinction between the two terms) is an inferential reflection of the natural law tradition grounded in the classicist worldview. Deeply distrustful of the notions of equality and participation of the members of society, Leo is a proponent of the view that a hierarchically established society is an inevitable occurrence, as the "untutored multitude" must be led and protected by the leader so charged with its welfare.⁵² The historical context influencing such a view included a fear of the power of liberalism, which Leo saw as a direct threat to the well-ordered state grounded in God's plan. Equality, for example, was an unthinkable option which found no place in this classical conception of society dictated by God's law:

...no one doubts that all men are equal one to another, so far as regards their common origin and nature, or the last end which each one has to attain, or the rights and duties which are thence derived. But as the abilities of all are not equal, as one differs from another in the powers of mind or body, and as there are many dissimilarities of manner, disposition and character, it is most repugnant to reason to endeavor to confine all within the same measure, and to extend complete equality to the institutions of civil life.⁵³

Leo continues with this perspective in Rerum Novarum, his letter on the rights of workers, with the notable exception that he makes a case for certain inalienable individual

⁵² Leo XIII, Libertas praestantissimum, n. 23, as cited in Etienne Gilson, ed. The Church Speaks to the Modern World: The Social Teaching of Leo XIII (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Image Books, 1954), 72.

⁵³ Leo XIII, Humanum Genus, n. 26, Gilson, 214, 215.

rights against the power of the state: marriage, private property and the right to resist socialism. This, as Curran notes, may be seen as "differing degrees of recognition of some freedom, equality and even of incipient participation as anthropological concerns."⁵⁴ Indeed, this evolution of the incorporation of equality and participation in the social teaching tradition is carried forward by Leo's successors, Pius XI and Pius XII, who, in their continued struggle against both liberalism and socialism, increasingly stressed the rights of individuals.⁵⁵ But the evolution of historical consciousness is our focus here, and having now exemplified the classicist worldview articulated by Leo XII, we turn to consider that evolution.

In his two major social encyclicals, Mater et Magistra and Pacem in Terris, John XXIII began a conceptual trend which has endured in the social teaching tradition. In both letters, John notes the vast number of historical variables which must be addressed in the particular situations of the world. Likewise, his successor Paul VI cites a number of specific contemporary topics which require attention in formulating a response to the equitable distribution of wealth and the just development of nations. The effect of this move toward history, context and particularity of a situation was to lessen the impact of the "social doctrine" of the Church -- "the vision of the plan deductively derived

⁵⁴ Curran, Social Ethics, 10-11.

⁵⁵ See Curran, Social Ethics, 11-15.

from natural law and proposed authoritatively by the church magisterium" -- and to augment a tendency to "begin with the signs of the times and with an analysis of the contemporary situation and not with some abstract principle divorced from historical reality."⁵⁶ Indeed, the "reading the signs of the times" becomes the cautiously promulgated method employed in the foundational Vatican II document about the Church, Gaudium et Spes.

This shift toward historical consciousness is best demonstrated in Paul VI's letter entitled Octogesima Adveniens, commemorating the eightieth anniversary of Rerum Novarum. In the letter, full recognition is granted to an historical, situational method of formulating moral teaching from the demands of unique situations and the base of "the Gospel's unalterable words," even though individual Christian communities might look to former church teaching to "draw principles of reflection, norms of judgment and directives for action:"

It is up to these Christian communities, with the help of the Holy Spirit, in communion with the bishops who hold responsibility and in dialogue with other Christian brethren and all men of goodwill to discern the options and commitments which are called for in order to bring about the social, political and economic changes seen in many cases to be urgently needed.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ibid., 20.

⁵⁷ Paul VI, Octogesima Adveniens, n.4, Joseph Gremillion, ed. The Gospel of Justice and Peace (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1976), 487.

The words "dialogue," "discern," "options," and "change" signal the admission of historicity in method to which we have been referring. The implied view of the human is a fluent, developmental one, and the pressing need to read the changing world likewise suggests a ready admission of the sciences as sources for moral reflection. Indeed, despite warnings about a "new positivism" based on science and technology, as well as humanity being "imprisoned within [its] own rationality" or its becoming the "object of science,"⁵⁸ a concluding section Octogesima Adveniens makes an optimistic claim about science's role in assisting the Church's articulation of "a global vision of man and the human race:"

Should the church in its turn contest the proceedings of the human sciences, and condemn their pretensions? As in the case of the natural sciences, the Church has confidence in this research also and urges Christians to play an active part in it. Prompted by the same scientific demands and the desire to know man better, but at the same time enlightened by their faith, Christians who devote themselves to the human sciences will begin a dialogue between the Church and this new field of discovery, a dialogue which promises to be fruitful.⁵⁹

A Turn from the Cosmos to the Person

The shift from the classicist to the historicist worldview illustrates the turn away from the cosmos and toward the person as the gauge for the moral life. In Leo XIII, the universe represented the eternal (and static) will

⁵⁸ Ibid., n. 38, 503.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 503-504.

of God to which all must be conformed. It is understandable, then, that he would be wary of the notion of equality, as all inequality of ability and power was determined by the divine structure of the universe. Likewise, the notions of personal freedom and individual conscience were incompatible with the universal will of God in the cosmos. As Curran has noted, "The only true meaning of the freedom of conscience [was] the freedom to follow the will of God and to do one's duty in obeying his commands."⁶⁰

Rerum Novarum seemed to hint at some autonomy for the individual, as it called for the rights on the individual in the face of two perceived evils, socialism and liberalism. Forty years later, when Pius XI wrote Quadragesimo anno to commemorate Leo's letter on the rights of workers, he included allusion to the dignity and rights of the individual, but as a means to fend off the influence of communism. Pius XII continued the move toward a recognition of the person-as-agent by accepting the idea of a limited constitutional state, a bold development when one considers Leo's view of the state (the ruler) as protector and promoter of the cause of the "untutored masses." With John XXIII's Mater et Magistra and Pacem in Terris came the admission of "freedom" as a ground for the dignity of the human, and a document of Vatican II, the Declaration on Religious Freedom, authored by John Courtney Murray, finally

⁶⁰ Curran, Social Ethics, 7.

proclaimed the dignity of the (individual) human person in the face of coercion by the state.

The dignity of the human person was the centerpiece of another Vatican II document on the role of the church in the world, Gaudium et Spes. For the purposes of the social doctrine tradition, it is most significant that this affirmation of the dignity of the person entailed the presence and promotion of equality, freedom and participation. But for our purpose here, it is important to note the accent placed upon the individual conscience:

For man has in his heart a law written by God. To obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged. Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of man. There he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths...In the fidelity of conscience, Christians are joined with the rest of men in the search for truth, and for the genuine solution to the numerous problems which arise in the life of individuals and from social relationships.⁶¹

This capstone to the evolution of the turn from the cosmos to the person as the gauge for the moral life is a critical reference point. By it we see the relatively new but central importance of the person-as-subject in the magisterial tradition. The study of the person in all of his or her complexity is implicitly affirmed, as are the various sources (including empirical ones) from which the Church may come to appreciate that human complexity:

Thanks to the experience of past ages, the progress of the sciences, and the treasures hidden

⁶¹ Gaudium et Spes, n. 16 in Walter Abbott, ed. The Documents of Vatican II (New York: Guild Press, 1966), 213-214.

in the various forms of human culture, the nature of man himself is more clearly opened and new roads to truth are opened.⁶²

Obscured distinction between "natural" and "supernatural"

With the changed worldview and the admission of historicity and subjectivity into the moral realm of the "natural," the clear distinction between natural and supernatural can no longer be made with such exaggerated confidence. The outcome of revisions such as Rahner's supernatural existential theology⁶³ is to find evidence of God's grace in descriptions of the "natural" qualities of human life. The blurring of this distinction is demonstrated briefly below in the comparison between two modes of thought evident in the magisterial teaching on marriage. One draws hard distinctions between natural and supernatural elements in marriage; the other, by its obvious silence about the distinction and its affirmation of the "graced natural" does not.

In Pius XI's encyclical on Christian marriage, he addresses the modern difficulties facing those who seek to live that vocation. Although most of his references in that regard are rather oblique, he does caution against the "chief obstacle" in "restoring due order in this matter of marriage" -- "the power of unbridled lust." The antidote is

⁶² Ibid., n. 44, 246.

⁶³ Rahner, Theological Investigations, Volume I (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, Ltd., 1961) See Chapter 9, pp. 297-317.

the life of grace, a seemingly sui generis entity which cannot be mediated by merely natural means:

They are greatly deceived who having underestimated or neglected these means which rise above nature, think that they can induce men by the use and discovery of the natural sciences, such as those of biology, the science of heredity, and the like, to curb their carnal desires...they are mistaken who think that these means are able to establish chastity in the nuptial union, or that they are more effective than supernatural grace...For just as in the natural order men must apply the powers given them by God with their own toil and diligence that these may exercise their full vigor, failing which, no profit is gained, so also men must diligently and unceasingly use the powers given them by the grace which is laid up in the soul by this sacrament.⁶⁴

By way of contrast, in his Apostolic Exhortation on the Family, John Paul II opens his discussion of the family by reviewing a theology of marriage in which he makes no reference to the specifically "supernatural" order. Instead, he conflates the natural and supernatural by accenting marriage as a sacramental covenant, which even in its "natural" expressions speaks of the depth of God's life within the person:

As an incarnate spirit, that is, a soul which expresses itself in a body and a body informed by an immortal spirit, man is called to love in his unified totality. Love includes the human body and the body is made a sharer in spiritual love...Consequently sexuality...is by no means something purely biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Pius XI, Casti connubii, sections 101 and 111, December 31, 1930 in Claudia Carlen, I.H.M., The Papal Encyclicals 1903-1939, Volume 3, (Salem, NH: McGrath Publishing Co., 1981), 407 and 409.

⁶⁵ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation on the Family, sec. 11, in Origins, December 24, 1981, 441.

The importance of this historically "official" acceptance of the natural as a mediator of God's grace is far-reaching for the life of the church. Like the shift to the historical worldview and the person as moral subject, the acceptance of the natural as an arena for God's grace implies, too, an acceptance of the study of that natural arena as an important source for illuminating the ways of God. Such study in our time must include the contribution of the empirical sciences such as psychology. Although neither of the letters cited above makes a direct appeal for psychology as a source of the study of the natural arena for God's grace, they, like the previous evolutionary discussions, provide a helpful backdrop and, I believe, an official justification for the use of an empirical science devoted to knowing the characteristics of human "nature."

The Call for the Use of Empirical Science

Given the evolution of official doctrine above, an evolution which, as we have seen, provides a warrant for the admission of empirical science in formulating a moral anthropology by its turn toward historicity, the person and the supernatural element in the natural, it is not surprising that a direct appeal for the use of empirical science in moral and theological reflection as well as

pastoral practice is made in later Church teaching.⁶⁶ In a directive describing the fruitful combining of Christian doctrine and morality with modern scientific thought, the words of Gaudium et Spes provide a final chapter in this development of thought:

May the faithful, therefore, live in very close union with the men of their time. Let them strive to understand perfectly their way of thinking and feeling, as expressed in their culture. Let them blend modern science and its theories and the understanding of the most recent discoveries with Christian morality and doctrine. Thus their religious practice and their morality can keep pace with their scientific knowledge and with an ever-advancing technology.⁶⁷

Finally, direct appeal is made for the specific use of psychology. According to Gaudium et Spes, no. 62,

In pastoral care, appropriate use must be made not only of theological principles, but also of the findings of the secular sciences, especially of psychology and sociology. Thus the faithful can be brought to live the faith in a more thorough and mature way.⁶⁸

Obviously, we have only used broad strokes in this limited discussion about warrants for the use of psychology

⁶⁶ In keeping with the evolutionary character of the presentation of this section of the chapter, it is interesting to note that as late as 1961, suspicion of psychology as an ancillary partner to theology was evident. The Holy Office issued a "Monitum," presented as a commentary on Canons 129 and 139 but actually a response to a censured psychological theory challenging the status of certain sexual acts as mortal sins. Among its other prohibitions, it stated that "priests and religious of either sex should not consult psychoanalysts unless their ordinary for grave reason gives permission." (Issued July 15, 1961. Translation from Canon Law Digest, Vol. 5, 196)

⁶⁷ Gaudium et Spes, n. 62 in Abbot, 269-270.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

in moral reflection. We have not taken up, for example, the issues of the limitation of the natural or social sciences in moral reflection or the ethical control of science and technology, both of which are intimately connected to this discussion. But having demonstrated warrants in the Catholic tradition for the use of psychology in moral reflection, I now conclude this chapter with a brief consideration of the fundamental contributions of psychology to the study of morality so that we might come to appreciate the possible benefits of those contributions to moral discernment and theology. Unfortunately, the scope of this chapter does not permit extensive critique of the adequacy of these theories from within their own discipline, but a discussion of their basic contours will be helpful to our thesis.

II. Psychology and the Study of Morality

Having addressed the first of our two questions for this chapter -- "Where might one find warrants for the use of psychology in Catholic pastoral moral discernment?" -- we now turn our attention to the second question of content -- "What do various psychological theories say about human morality?" In the summary discussion to follow, I wish to examine three "classical" psychological theories of personality and moral development: the psychoanalytic, cognitive-constructivist and the social-learning theories. I will outline features of the theories as they respond to three questions which I have posed to each formulation:

First, what constitutes morality and how does it emerge in the course of human development? Second, what are the philosophical and anthropological underpinnings of the theory? Third, what are the advantages and disadvantages of the theory?⁶⁹ This is, of course, a radically abridged discussion which presumes much and lacks the nuance required to fully explicate each theory. It is designed to situate the reader by providing simple contours of the theories in preparation for the more thorough discussion of the social interactional proposal in the next chapter.

What constitutes morality and how does it emerge in the course of human development?

According to the psychoanalytic perspective, morality is the mediation and control of basic, self-centered instincts and impulses which are present in the person from birth. These impulses are tied to the gratification of needs for pleasure -- oral, anal and genital. Naturally, not all of these needs on the part of individuals can be met, or collective life would be impossible. So morality is the internalization, control and mediation of these needs as they make themselves known in the development of the

⁶⁹ These questions loosely follow the structure of the comparative discussion of theories of moral development found in Bonnidell Clouse, Moral Development: Perspectives in Psychology and Christian Belief (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985) Although I have formulated them for my purposes by adding and deleting factors for discussion, I refer the reader to this book, which has excellent synopses of the theories at hand to which I am indebted, as well as a proposal for a specifically Christian theory of moral development.

individual, and as they are presented to others, who in turn have similar constellations of needs which must be gratified. As such, morality is a response to the tension and conflict engendered by self-centered needs not being immediately met. The most critical period of internalization, mediation and control of the needs is early childhood. Consequently, the caretaker's role is key, both actual and symbolic, in the emergence of morality in the person.

Sigmund Freud articulates this scheme as the id, representing the various ungratified needs, the superego, representing the control of the needs, and the ego, the behavioral mediation of the needs and the demands of the controlling elements. The development of the superego, the "civilizing" of the id which promotes the action of the ego, is very much intertwined with the resolution of the oedipal complex. In the course of that resolution, the child internalizes the prohibitions of the same-sex parent and this is what eventually constitutes the superego, or morality, in the person. Although it is not strictly a prohibitionist theory in that some modifications of it have included the "ego ideal" as a positive driving force in the moral life, it is generally considered to be based upon censure and avoidance. The conflict which one experiences in the tension between impulse and control is sometimes mediated through a number of defense mechanisms by which one "saves face," maintaining a sense of personal integrity in

the midst of conflicting demands. Aborted or traumatic resolutions of the oedipal complex and the malformation of the superego may lead to a skewed notion of what constitutes the moral life. Because the superego, which is the controlling action, is well in place by early childhood, all action in the course of one's lifetime might be seen as the unfree response either to the superego specifically engendered by the parents or some intervening surrogate authority. In short, "conscience" is set relatively early:

Clearly the repression of the Oedipus complex was no easy task. The child's parents and especially his father, were perceived as the obstacle to a realization of his Oedipus wishes; so his infantile ego fortified itself for the carrying out of the repression by erecting this same obstacle within itself.⁷⁰

Erik Erikson articulates the above tension in a scheme of developmental phases, each of which presents its own respective conflict which must be resolved prior to the person moving forward to the next phase. Maintaining an epigenetic principle for this development, i.e., that all movement forward is merely the actualization of inherent potential for growth, Erikson accounts for moral life in the adult as an accrual of strengths or "virtues" which are the result of the successful resolution of the challenges presented during eight such phases. In infancy, for example, the conflict between trust and mistrust is resolved

⁷⁰ The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, translated and editorship by James Strachey, volume xix, The Ego and the Id and Other Works (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), 34.

by the assimilation of the virtue of hope; in adolescence, the conflict between identity and identity confusion is resolved in fidelity; in adulthood, the conflict between generativity and self-absorption is resolved in care; and in old age, the conflict between integrity and despair about the shape of one's past life is resolved through the accrual of wisdom. The presentation and resolution of the conflicts is a matter of interplay between the individual psyche, the individual's generational place in a family and the course of history.⁷¹ A different branch of the psychoanalytic tradition which stresses development over the whole life cycle, Erikson's theory puts less stock than Freud in the total determination of morality in early childhood, although early conflict must be successfully resolved in order for development to occur. Moreover, circumstances in one's life may require the reviewing of earlier resolved conflicts, such that one does not speak of "achieving" certain levels of strength. This suggests a more fluent developmental scheme than the all-important and early resolution of Freud's oedipal complex.

By contrast, the cognitive-morality proposal for development of morality is based upon the basic presupposition of cognitive development, that is, that forms of thinking and cognition develop in the individual and give rise to ways of reasoning in general and moral reasoning in

⁷¹ See Erik Erikson, Insight and Responsibility (New York: Norton, 1964) and Identity: Youth and Crisis (New York: Norton, 1968)

particular. The stress in this theory is on a person's logical capacities to entertain multiple conceptual variables. As logic, the appreciation of reversibility, and hypothetical thinking develops, so too does the capacity for sound moral reasoning. It is highly individual in its focus, and it is a "constructivist" theory which claims that reasoning, and by way of specific inference, moral reasoning, develops in stages which build upon one another. Moreover, these stages occur in an invariant sequence which is arranged in a hierarchy of increasingly "adequate" forms of thinking. Because the concern is with the forms of thinking and not the content of moral thoughts, cognitivists lay claim to a theory of morality which is universal, that is, not culturally specific.

Jean Piaget is the foundational theorist of cognitive moral development.⁷² Following Hartshorne and May's groundbreaking experiments which seemed to demonstrate the questionability of traditional moral education and the notion of "character,"⁷³ Piaget set out to test moral development in children through the observation of them at play, especially in their regard for rules which govern the

⁷² See Jean Piaget, The Moral Judgment of the Child (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., Ltd., 1932)

⁷³ Hartshorne, H. and May, M.A., Studies in the Nature of Character, Vol. 1: Studies in Deceit (New York: Mcmillan, 1928); Hartshorne, H., May, M.A. and Maller, J.B., Studies in the Nature of Character, Vol. 2: Studies in Self-Control (New York: Macmillan, 1929); and Hartshorne, H., May, M.A. and Shuttlesworth, F.K., Studies in the Nature of Character: Vol. 3: Studies in the Organization of Character (New York: Macmillan, 1930)

games which they initiated and in which they participated. His conclusion was that moral development is not a process of imprinting rules and virtues but a process involving transformation of cognitive structures. The first broad division which Piaget noted in children's moral development was between a heteronomous and autonomous orientation to rules and the "morality" for which they stood in the playing of games. While the "heteronomous" child sees rules as divinely instituted (through adults) and therefore beyond question, the older child who has more of an "autonomous" orientation toward the rules, sees them as the outcome of free decision, mutual consent, and requirements for group relationships. How does the child progress from one appreciation of rules to the other, from the objective "moral realism" of early childhood to the subjective, cooperative "moral relativism" of later childhood and adolescence? Piaget outlined a recurring cognitive experience in the children which consist of four movements: schematizing, assimilating, accommodating and internalizing. Finally, he outlined four principal stages of cognitive development: the sensory-motor stage, which allows for movement, raw actions and pre-reflective habits; the pre-operational stage, which allows for the child to experience sensations in relation to self with no classification of the information; the concrete operational stage in which one internalizes ideas of classes and series; and the formal operational stage in which one goes beyond the particular

and trial-and-error knowledge, on to the general and the hypothetical and may plan according to the hypothetical.

Hartshorne and May continued Piaget's work with their own ground-breaking experiments. Lawrence Kohlberg incorporated Piaget's conclusions into a cognitive scheme of moral development which, it is fair to say, has dominated the field of moral psychology in America in the last twenty years.⁷⁴ Relying upon verbal responses to hypothetical moral dilemmas, Kohlberg measured the moral reasoning employed by respondents. In a conceptual framework which largely parallels Piaget's concrete and formal operational thinking,⁷⁵ Kohlberg identified three major levels of thinking into which six stages of moral reasoning are subsumed: the preconventional level, containing Stage 1, moral reasoning based upon the avoidance of punishment, and Stage 2, moral reasoning based upon instrumental satisfaction; the conventional level, containing Stage 3, moral reasoning based upon a "good-boy-nice-girl" personalist orientation, and Stage 4, moral reasoning based upon a law and order orientation; and the postconventional level, containing Stage 5, moral reasoning based upon a social-contractual agreement, and Stage 6, moral reasoning

⁷⁴ See Lawrence Kohlberg, Philosophy of Moral Development (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981) and Lawrence Kohlberg, Psychology of Moral Development (San Francisco: Harper and Row: 1984)

⁷⁵ There is some debate on how much Piaget has directly influenced Kohlberg. For a good discussion of this, see Gabriel Moran, Religious Education Development: Images for the Future (Minneapolis: Winston Press, Inc., 1983), Ch. 4.

based upon universal ethical principles. Kohlberg stated that the stage development is sequentially invariant, i.e., it must progress through the stages in order, that subjects cannot comprehend reasoning at a stage more than one stage beyond their own, that subjects are cognitively attracted to moral reasoning one level above their own, and that movement through the stages is occasioned by "cognitive disequilibrium" created when one's reasoning will not suffice in satisfactorily adjudicating the hypothetical moral dilemmas. The scheme is predicated upon the hypothesis that increasing ability to think abstractly implies increasingly adequate means of solving moral dilemmas. So cognitive ability and age are necessary but not sufficient conditions for moral growth. Kohlberg managed to finesse the wholesale criticism of committing the naturalistic fallacy by responding that his theory only describes the form but not the content of thinking, and therefore, he does not prescribe an "ought" from an "is" as such. (Chapter 4 of The Philosophy of Moral Development is sub-titled, "How to Commit the Naturalistic Fallacy and Get Away With It.") As I will discuss in the next chapter, Kohlberg's theory has received significant other criticism since its publication, and he revised it according to his critics several times.

Finally, for the social learning theorists of personality and moral development, moral behavior and action are key considerations. Without the capacity to control

behavior, they contend, moral judgment is interesting but of no real consequence. Further, social theorists say that one must first learn to control behavior and obey rules before discovering the reasons why. The social learning school, then, discards moral reasoning as the indicator of moral development. Instead, they stress measurable performance and learned, internalized behavior as the gauge of moral development. "Conscience," or the moral capacity, is principally a matter of accepting and assimilating behavioral cues of a given society. The cues, of course, will vary from society to society, and cultural relativity is a linchpin of this theory. Far from the psychoanalytic theory's set conscience or the permanent faculty of managing instincts, social learning theory would allow for the changing demands of society and the situation. In fact, one of the key objects of interest in social learning theory of morality is the "doctrine of specificity" by which one measures the particular response of a given agent in a particular situation, irrespective of the agent's so-called "character."

Emile Durkheim classic sociological theory of morality is akin to the social learning theory. According to Durkheim, morality as constituted by three elements:

- 1) society, a sui generis entity which endows us and to which we therefore owe allegiance, 2) discipline, which collective life teaches us so that we might have regularity and order in our lives, and 3) autonomy, so that through

knowledge, we might find the demands of society reasonable and not coercive.⁷⁶

More recent social learning experiments and theories have attended to the specifics of moral performance and action, including the effects of temptation on "character" traits; situational deviance from norms based upon age, sex, intelligence, personality characteristics, group norms, risk of being caught and incentive to deviate; and the effects of punishment on recidivism in moral deviance. Most recently, social learning theorists have begun to explore the effects of cognitive as well as affective factors on moral behavior, suggesting a new rapprochement with other theories.⁷⁷

What are the philosophical and/or anthropological underpinnings of each theory?

In the psychoanalytic theory, the human person, viewed as a bundle of needs which seeks gratification, is a self-centered being. Owing to its emphasis upon the unconscious longings of individuals, the psychoanalytic theory tends to describe human morality in irrational terms. As with all of the theories, morality from the psychoanalytic perspective is a multivalent phenomenon which cannot be judged at face

⁷⁶ See Emile Durkheim, Moral Education: A Study in the Theory and Application of the Sociology of Education trans. by Everett K. Wilson and Herman Schurer (New York: The Free Press, 1973)

⁷⁷ For an good treatment of the social-learning approaches to moral development, as well as a comprehensive bibliography, see William M. Casey and Roger V. Burton, "The Social-Learning Theory Approach" in Gary L. Sapp, ed., Handbook of Moral Development (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1986)

value; but the pre-reflective mystery of the id which surrounds human decision and action tends to minimize the traditional role of free will and choice. Indeed, the psychoanalytic tradition has been consistently criticized as a theory in search of experimental validation. To say the least, humanity is seen as basically governed by the urgings of sexuality, and morality is principally a matter of control. The control is first exercised externally and even after internalization, it continues as a force which is paradoxically outside oneself. It is a fundamentally individual notion of human life and growth. The solitary psyche is the battleground for the mediation of impulses, controls and appropriate behavior. The influence of social life is apparently minimal, and there is no mention of social cooperation for its own sake, let alone as an important catalyst for moral growth. In fact, Erikson's variation notwithstanding, one might make the case that although psychoanalytic theory describes a morality, it does not put much stock in development as such. In the Freudian conception, the radical formation of moral impulses at an early age suggest a sense of determinism. Even in the Eriksonian conception, which seems to allow for development, the conflicts which must be resolved still correspond to the well-entrenched oral, anal and genital needs, and regression and recurrence of these conflicts are regular features of the scheme.

Contrary to the psychoanalytic view, the cognitive-constructivist view of humanity stresses the rational element almost to the exclusion of the affective and irrational characteristics of morality. Because the stress is on forms of cognition, human morality is articulated as cognitive morality. Moreover, there is a highly individual quality to moral reasoning and action, although the increasing levels of cognition are typified by recognition of the claims of other people, with cooperation, respect for the rights of others and justice receiving due emphasis. But justice in the Kohlbergian theory, for example, is not a fluent idea of equity which takes into account non-quantifiable aspects such as human affect; it is instead a rather mathematical notion suggestive of John Rawls' theory of justice. As such, it has a bias in its moral anthropology toward a western liberalism based upon justice as it is articulated in social contract theory. Moral life is distinct in its respect for the autonomy of individuals and based upon a rational calculus of their claims.

Social-learning theorists follow John Locke's view of humanity, that persons are born as "tabulae rasae," or blank slates, upon which society imprints its own mores, customs and ethos. Humans are infinitely elastic, malleable and receptive. At least in past articulations of the social-learning perspective, humans are relatively one-dimensional moral creatures who can be well known simply by the qualities of their actions. The social-learning theory sees

humans as naturally social, not merely drawing cues for individual behavior from a collective, but living naturally in that collective, with moral life consisting in optimal conditions for thriving there. The accent on situational morality with a suspicion of "character" reveals a dim view of the coherence or steady continuity of human moral life.

What are the critical advantages and disadvantages of each theory?

The psychoanalytic articulation of human morality unveils the unconscious as a force to be reckoned with in understanding moral reasoning and action. According to it, we simply cannot presume in explicating morality that all may be taken at face value. This is a crucial insight which must be weighed in the ethical discourse of any "strictly" religious or philosophical formulation of the moral life which purports to describe how persons really think, feel and comport themselves. But the social nature of humanity seems to be an after-thought in this theory which places too much emphasis on the individual psyche as the locus for moral instincts. Indeed, the exaggerated role of emotional conflict in early life seems to downplay the importance of reason and will, and the heavy emphasis on the unconscious negates the importance of conscious moral striving in dialogue, reciprocity and justice. Also, in its Freudian version, this is a theory which is based upon pathology. Freud's interest in recording features of the human psyche was prompted by pathology which he encountered in his

therapeutic practice. The "sample" was often comprised of those with overactive superegos which had engendered obsessive, compulsive, hysterical and psychotic expressions. Finally, the theory answers its critics by its own internal logic and language, rather than bearing out its theses scientifically.

The fundamental contribution of the cognitive-constructivist theory is that it accentuates the traditionally distinctive feature of human moral reflection -- reason. In many religious and philosophical systems, the moral anthropology begins with this distinctive feature and proceeds to other considerations. A scientific exposition of the development of cognition sheds light on the meaning attached to reason in the moral life. But this focus is also the downfall of the theory. As many can attest, morality is more than logic, deduction and increasingly adequate ways of reasoning. In short, there are many persons whose powers of reason are relatively undeveloped but who are moral exemplars, and there are many whose rational (and rationalizing) skills are superior but whose moral lives are less than edifying. Additionally, in the case of Kohlberg, many serious criticisms about the six-stage scheme have surfaced in the past ten years. These criticisms include Kohlberg's all-male research sampling, doubts about the adequacy of hypothetical dilemmas as determinants of the development of moral reasoning, and questions about his distinctions between form and content in

morality. I will offer more detailed explanations of these criticisms of Kohlberg in the next chapter.

As I have alluded above, the social learning theory of moral growth makes two major contributions to our understanding of morality. First, it promotes a social moral anthropology, reminding us that morality has to do with society and our life together, and it is not easily extracted from that fact for the purpose of study. Second, in its concern for action as a gauge of morality, it brings to the forefront the truth that sound reasoning and eloquence do not a moral being make. But if society is the sole provider of norms and the content of moral life, one can make the critical charge that there is little understanding in this theory for those who on "moral" grounds stand outside society and offer critique, resistance and disobedience based upon individual conviction. Deficient societal norms are unaddressed. Additionally, the strength of concentrating on action as the gauge of morality can become a weakness if reason and affect, for example, are neglected to the point that morality becomes too narrowly defined as action itself.

These "classical" theories represent the basic movements toward an articulation of morality in psychological terms. Other theories have recently emerged, either in response to these formulations or on their own.

One such "alternative" theory which will serve as a foundation for this thesis is the social interactional proposal by Norma Haan, to which we will now turn our attention.

CHAPTER 2

THE INTERACTIONAL VIEW OF MORALITY: NORMA HAAN'S THEORY OF PRACTICAL MORALITY

I. The Social-Interactional Proposal

Moral Grounds and the Contours of the Theory

The fundamental tenet of Norma Haan's theory of morality is that moral action and development are common everyday occurrences. Morality is not a grand theory whose features we learn; it is not a set of discrete practices which we slowly assimilate and predictably act out in our lives; it is not a circumscribed procedure reserved for people of advanced logical and deductive powers. Morality for Norma Haan and her associates is encountered in even the most pedestrian activities of human life.

This would seem to confirm our best suspicions: The moral life is not optimally tested and described in terms of moral crises, impeccable logic, superior cognition or access to philosophical secrets. It is not simply the domain of those who practice religion or those who embrace a consciously articulated philosophy of life. We seem to know this. We find ourselves often inspired by the moral impulses and actions of people who are virtual strangers to these things, and we begin to sense -- if only in a visceral way -- that morality cuts across lines of age, gender, cognitive

development, social class and personal ideology. As other psychological and philosophical theorists of morality have come to understand, any highly restrictive notion of what constitutes morality may readily be contradicted by common sense. There are saints who may test only at "Stage Four" of Kohlberg's scheme, and there are scoundrels whose formal operational thinking is of the highest order. Haan has established this insight as the foundational premise of her work.

Given that morality is encountered as an everyday occurrence, that it is the very water in which we swim, what then is the "content" of this occurrence according to Haan? The content, the object of study, is human social interchange. As we will discuss shortly, Haan contends that by the quality of our social interchange we may determine the adequacy of our morality.

In stating this openly, Haan has chosen a certain theory of value, a moral ground on which to stand, a place from which she empirically investigates morality. This is a methodological move which requires some justification. Many moral philosophers would immediately charge that Haan's move constitutes the cardinal sin in proposing a moral theory, namely, committing the naturalistic fallacy. Haan has answered the charge by noting that psychology possesses the unique opportunity and ability to get behind the question which has plagued moral philosophy, "Why be moral?"

The philosophical investigation of this question prompts concern about the naturalistic fallacy, lest philosophers proceed unreflectively or covertly from a personal basis of value. But psychology, Haan argues, is engaged by a different, prior question, "What is morality?" So, while philosophers are preoccupied by the motivation for morality and check themselves about preferred theoretical points of departure such as greatest good, categorical imperative or justice conceived behind a veil of ignorance, psychologists seek the "practical, everyday morality that given the opportunity, all people would presumably endorse as the way they would ideally act."¹ Psychologists, then, can rightfully capitalize on the methods presumed in an empirical enterprise and thus state openly, albeit provisionally, a premise to be tested. Haan outlines guidelines for any psychological research about morality:

First, the naturalistic fallacy must be committed, and a tentative, working formulation of moral grounds that is forever open to revision, refinement and abandonment must be chosen. Second, we assume that the social scientist's special task is to discover, describe and explain the practical morality that people and societies actually idealize. Third, we assume that social scientist's effort will be more fruitful and society will be better served if a universal morality --²if such exists -- is the target of their work.

¹ Norma Haan, "Moral Development and Action From a Social Constructivist Perspective" [Draft of Unpublished Manuscript] (Courtesy of author, 1987), 3.

² Norma Haan, Eliane Aerts and Bruce A.B. Cooper, On Moral Grounds: The Search for Practical Morality (New York: New York University Press, 1985), 44-45.

Thus, the enterprise of psychologists according to Haan is the search for "thin" assumptions of value, rather than the "thick"³ ones which philosophers have proposed and criticized. That is, psychologists are not engaged by "best" theories but by "true" ones, and their object of study is the depiction of a common operative morality. While "best" theories propose specific values and principles by which one should live, "true" theories describe the basic perimeters within which all people perform in moral situations. While a philosopher often argues his or her "best" theory by demonstrating its superior premise or elegant logic, the psychologist may argue for the adequacy of a "true" theory based upon its ability to describe a universally existent phenomenon.

In this case, Haan seeks to describe a "true" theory of common morality. Since what is at stake is morality itself, values are of course involved, and one must concede that "thin" values which elicit wide agreement are present. All of this could well be a misguided project, as it is possible that no such common morality exists, even of the "thin" kind. But as Haan states, "to assume otherwise before the work is done would seem to be a failure of scientific nerve."⁴

³ See John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1971)

⁴ Haan, "Moral Development...", 3.

In addition to these methodological convictions about the necessary commission of the naturalistic fallacy as well as the legitimacy of seeking a practical and universal morality, Haan stresses the need to bear out her theory by studying moral action as opposed to moral reasoning. As I will discuss below, this departs from other theories which are content to consider reasoning and speech, for example, as the principal determinants of morality. Sharing her conviction with the social-learning perspective on morality, she defends action as the primary gauge:

Action is regarded, in everyday life, as the only authentic criterion of moral truth. Understanding the conditions for the disparities between what people think and what they do could lead to understanding moral default, callousness, and courage. Although many societies have attempted to hold people morally responsible for their thoughts, programs of thought control invariably fail or are imperfectly enforced. Reported thoughts are readily simulated; authentic thoughts become private and the controller finds that evidence is inaccessible.⁵

Having outlined the general contours of Haan's methodological starting points, we return to a discussion of content, examining some of the constitutive parts of the social interaction proposal of morality.

As noted above, the foundational concept upon which other assertions rest is that practical morality consists of social interaction. This is articulated as dialogue. Haan asserts that moral dialogues occur at all times, filling our

⁵ Norma Haan, "An Interactional Morality of Everyday Life," in Social Science As Moral Inquiry, eds. Norma Haan, Robert N. Bellah, Paul Rabinow, and William M. Sullivan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 230-231.

lives with endless negotiations of positions, claims, convictions, rights and feelings, to the point that we may be unaware of them. These negotiations may be between two people, within the ambivalent mind of a single person, between a person and a society, or between societies. In the course of these dialogues we come to know and develop our capacity for achieving some equitable balance with others who are likewise engaged. A common pattern for the commencement, conduct and resolution of this dialogue might be the following: Some "moral contretemps" occurs which draws the attention of both parties (or positions, in the case of one ambivalent mind), such that discussion must occur. This discussion is executed in good faith, and a balance or equilibrium is established or restored.⁶

The quality of the discussion as well as the outcome are the determinants of morality, and this is a distinguishing feature of the theory. In its practical, everyday consideration, morality itself is as much predicated on the process of equilibration as is the final outcome. Discussions conducted in bad faith or defensiveness, for example, even if they result in some mutually agreed-upon course of action, do not genuinely qualify as establishing or re-establishing the desired moral outcome, equilibrium. True "equalization" occurs when participation is at a maximum, that is, when all parties can freely contribute to the exploration and resolution of the

⁶ Haan, "Moral Development and Action...", 7-8.

issue at hand.⁷ Forging the equitable outcome is a complex matter of attentive respect for all dimensions of the discussion -- the issue, the context and the participants. As such, emotions and context, for example, play critical roles in the social interactional proposal; their importance in the process of equalizing and in the outcome of equalization is an accepted element of the theory:

For one person to understand another, attitudes of receptivity and amity are required; people must cast their self-preoccupation aside. The dialogue persuades and corrects both parties despite their initial intentions. Typically, each party brings out cognitive-affective considerations. Sometimes people prefer and choose the best rational-cognitive argument (such is our commitment to logic and reality), but the objective circumstances do not always override the emotional importance of less rational views.⁸

As with any dialogue, the parties cannot be invested in "winning," lest the process be completely subverted. Haan is quick to point out that the dialogue is conducted as much to discover points of agreement and similarity as it is to discover points of contention and difference. In a

⁷ Haan does account for exceptions in this basic theory of equalization, noting that some dialogues are such that equalization simply cannot be the expectation. Of special interest here are the "legitimated imbalances" of the parent-child relationship or persons of inherently unequal power such as physically able and physically handicapped persons, as well as non-legitimated imbalances arising from insincerity of the parties, neurotic interchange, unequal social caste or the disparity in psychological statuses such as stress. I will later comment on the last of these imbalances, as I discuss one of Haan's central corollary theories, "coping" and "defending" in moral dialogue. For a treatment of the others, see "Moral Development and Action...", 12-16.

⁸ Ibid., 8-9.

discussion which is marked by true equalization, "losing" is not moral "deficiency" as it is in moral theories of "thick" assumption. As Haan demonstrates in her explanation of equalization:

In the best circumstances, the achieved balance rests on the parties' creation of equity because they discover that they have common interest. But other balances are workable: compromises of advantages, wherein all receive smaller advantage than they initially wanted; compromises of disadvantages, wherein all suffer some disadvantages; or choice of the lesser of two evils. In real life solutions are often rational, which is not always the same as their being logically impeccable. Given the complexity of human interchange and the unique needs of each person, we all expect to suffer occasional minor injustice, if it is not perpetuated and if it is the only nearly rational solution available.⁹

"Losing" is "not necessarily devastating to participants, because being wrong concerns what a person is doing, which can be merely mistaken or foolish and not necessarily immoral."¹⁰

Unlike other psychological and philosophical moral theories which presuppose that morality consists of checking unbridled self-interest and accounting for others' claims according to pre-established principles, Haan's interactional proposal openly acknowledges and promotes self-interest as a key factor in genuine equalization. One of the starting points for the theory is that, as Freud has noted, persons naturally want to consider themselves as moral beings. (As I relate below, this is a primary

⁹ Haan, Social Science As Moral Inquiry, 235.

¹⁰ Ibid., 9.

motivation for moral action according to Haan's theory.) As a practical concern, a genuine dialogue, the essence of morality, cannot ensue unless parties may commence on terms of equal regard. Concessions which are gifts ultimately undermine equalization:

That selves must guiltlessly receive their deserts in order to function givingly is an insight of modern psychology. If the self is not adequately considered by the self and if the self does not require the other to consider the self's claims, the stage is set for morally corrupt, masochistic relations...Balances cannot be achieved by benevolence. Thus, we can see why the magnanimity of the welfare state morally violates rather than pleases its recipients; instead of gifts,¹¹ people much prefer what is legitimately theirs.

This outline of the foundational concept of morality-as-interaction/dialogue offers a starting point for an exposition of Haan's theory. In order to explicate the content of the interactional proposal more fully, we will look closely at two major topics within the theory, moral development and moral action.¹²

Moral Development and Action

One of the most interesting distinguishing features of moral development as conceived by the interactional proposal is that young children are viewed as "morally naive but immediately induced to participate reciprocally." Quite simply, this is a very positive view of humanity which is offered in contradistinction to other theories which stress

¹¹ Ibid., 19-20.

¹² The discussions of development and action follow the outline provided in Tables 4.3 and 4.4 in Haan, et. al., On Moral Grounds..., 67 and 71, respectively.

children's egocentricity or virtual neutrality. The word "naive" suggests a much more hopeful "state" in which the person begins life. Growth is not an ordeal of squelching impulses but a matter of experientially discovering the advantages of reciprocity and cooperation. Indeed, the movement in moral development is described as a "gradual progression toward more complex, discriminating dialogical skills," as opposed to movement through an invariant stage sequence culminating in the most "adequate" conception of justice. Development is clearly a matter of an accrual of social skills through social and emotional experience, rather than an increase in one's capacity for logic, as most cognitive theories maintain. Consequently, social interchange assumes great importance as the necessary but not sufficient condition for moral development, and the limiting condition for development is the total lack or thwarting of participation in social interchanges.

What emerges here is a portrait of development which is highly fluid and dependent from the initial stages on the quality of interaction in the life of the agent. All "development" is interactional, i.e., dependent on the quality of dialogue generated; therefore, it can only loosely be outlined in stage form because, as Haan notes,

...moral skill occurs as forms of dialogues and solutions achieved earlier are reused, but most often revised, modified, or elaborated in new dialogues. This "creative," inductive, particularized quality of moral discussion and

solution makes it highly unlikely that the development of moral skill is accurately characterized by successively structurally homogeneous stages.¹³

The "vehicle of change," the opportunity for development, in this scheme of moral development is social and intersubjective disequilibrium, i.e., some kind of interpersonal stress or upheaval, which puts in motion the accrued dialogical skills and challenges the agent to create new skills which respond to that particular situation. Rather than employing moral principles from a past tradition as the major premises from which courses of action may be deduced, the agent reinterprets and incorporates historic moral principles according to the creative construction of the dialogical solution for a given context and situation. Because of the obvious emphasis on action and interaction, a design for "educational intervention" would include the "opportunity to participate in actual and important moral experience," rather than contrived tests of moral character or exposure to "higher," increasingly adequate moral reasoning.

¹³ Haan, et. al., On Moral Grounds...., 61. Haan does describe five "levels of interactional morality" which "represent progressively more demanding criteria for identifying the quality of people's moral activity," noting the changes in various features of interactional growth, including the forms of the moral balance, the consideration of self and others as moral beings and objects, the taking of chances on others' good faith, righting the wrongs others commit, overall justification for balance and reasons for transitions between levels. See Table 4.2, 62-64 in On Moral Grounds....

Similarly, we can characterize the social interactional proposal's view of the conditions for moral action. The context of that action, as we have seen, is a dialogue in which the parties openly consider the particular features of a situation. The dialogue proceeds through an inductive clarification of all positions, issues and emotions of all parties involved, with a conscious, free participation of all. The determined course of action is the agreement, the moral balance forged by the process of the dialogue. Emotions play an important part, as they are essential conditions which facilitate or deter the action of equalizing. In fact, an agent's experience of stress or a situation's potential for creating moral oppressiveness can undermine or inhibit effective action.¹⁴ The motivations for action are the maintenance and promotion of the view of the self as moral, as well as the relatively uncomplicated desire to enhance relationships with others. Moreover, the social or societal stipulation of the opportunity for full participation of all members of the dialogue ensures moral action. Haan lists three capacities for genuine moral action according to the scheme: the persons' level of moral skill; the public nature of the dialogues, i.e., that all contributions and expectations are openly articulated and understood; and the workability of the inductive

¹⁴ See the discussion below on Haan's theory of "Strategies of Coping and Defending in Moral Action," Chapter 10 in Haan, et. al., On Moral Grounds....

particularistic solutions that match the demands of the situations.¹⁵

Coping and Defending

Unimpeded exchange and participation are of paramount importance for both moral action and development in the social interactional proposal. Emotions, both articulated and unarticulated, are also key factors in moral exchange and participation. Because the interactional proposal states that morality is more emotionally charged than a merely rational calculus, that it is, as Haan has termed it, a "hot" rather than "cool" cognition, it is natural to ask what exactly is the role of emotions in the interactions from which development and action flow.

Haan has done significant work to answer the question, focusing her attention on the function of defense mechanisms in moral exchange. Borrowing the defending functions from Freud's theory of ego defenses for the "id," and supplementing these with corresponding "coping" techniques, Haan developed a theory which accompanies the interactional proposal to explain the role of stress and emotion in moral interaction. According to Haan, a common occurrence is that people experience stress in encountering a situation requiring moral discernment. Although that stress may actually assist them toward good discernment by heightening

¹⁵ For an example of a conversation which exhibits some of the elements of the interactional proposal, see the "lightly edited" and annotated verbatim of a conversation among college students on pp. 220-223 in Social Science As Moral Inquiry.

their awareness, involvement and participation, often it prevents or obscures a "coping" with the particular situation which would serve sound discernment much better:

When people cope with stress, I mean that their considerations and choices of actions are likely to be more apt, differentiated, and sensitive. When people defend themselves, they are more likely to distort and become diffused, rigid, and obtuse. Thus a major hypothesis of our research has been that levels of moral adequacy will rise when people cope and fall when they defend.¹⁶

"Coping" and "defending" are not merely descriptive of moral discernment, though. They describe actions that people "characteristically or immediately take to solve problems"¹⁷ in general. I will not attempt a full explanation of the "coping and defending" thesis here.¹⁸ But it is important for our purposes at least to note properties of the two types of ego processes, as I will be interested in the implications of coping and defending, especially in developing a critical method for pastoral moral discernment. Haan's "pivotal assumption" about people's temporary use of coping and defending techniques, regardless of their characteristic mode of moral interaction, is highly germane to my thesis: "People will cope when they can, simply

¹⁶ Haan, "Moral Development and Action...", 22.

¹⁷ Haan, et. al., On Moral Grounds..., 128.

¹⁸ I refer the reader to Norma Haan, Coping and Defending (New York: Academic Press, 1977) or Chapter 8 of On Moral Grounds..., entitled "Coping and Defending With Moral Conflict."

because coping works better, but they will defend if they must in an overpowering situation."¹⁹

The coping and defending processes which people employ in interactionally solving moral dilemmas are generally characterized by the following properties: Coping involves choice and flexible behavior, is pulled toward the future but takes account of the present needs and requirements of the situation. It involves a differentiation of thought which promotes the separation of elements for consideration, and it allows for the satisfaction of affect in open ways, particularly disturbing affects which are expressed but "metered." Defending, on the other hand, involves the turning away from choice and thereby favors rigid response. It is not future-oriented, but pushed from the past, and it tends to distort the consideration of present elements of the situation. It characteristically involves undifferentiated thinking which takes in unrelated elements for consideration. There may be attempts to achieve affective satisfaction by defending and thereby creating a subterfuge of the situation, and there is a mistaken assumption that disturbing feelings will "magically" disappear.²⁰

Haan outlines ten of these coping and defending processes, dividing them into four classifications: cognitive processes by which people reason, reflexive-

¹⁹ Haan, et. al., On Moral Grounds..., 131.

²⁰ From Table 8.2, Ibid.

intrceptive processes by which people interact with their own thoughts and feelings, attention-focusing processes, and affective-impulse regulating processes by which people regulate emotions and feelings. (See table 90A) This scheme begins to describe the range of discernment techniques employed by people of varying personality traits. "For example, intellectuals often cope cognitively (objectivity, intellectuality, and logical analysis) whereas artists characteristically cope more emotionally (sublimation, substitution, and suppression)."²¹ Further extrapolations based upon extroversion and introversion, for example, seem quite possible. Additionally, it would seem to be of great interest to determine whether characteristic coping processes are accompanied by directly corresponding defending processes or whether there would be a crossover from reflexive-intrceptive processes to cognitive processes in the case of certain personality traits, level of moral skill and the type of situation. In other words, does a moral agent who is typically emotionally expressive always defend by doubt, projection or regression, or does he or she occasionally defend with the more typical cognitive defenses of isolation, intellectualization or rationalization? Nonetheless, this accompanying theory offers great assistance to those attempting to develop a conceptual framework for describing practical moral discernment techniques.

²¹ Ibid.

Taxonomy and Examples of Ego Processes

Generic Processes	Modes	
	Coping	Defending
	Cognitive Processes	
Discrimination: Separates idea from feeling, idea from idea, feeling from idea	Objectivity: "I am of two minds about this problem."	Isolation: "There is no forest, only trees."
Detachment: Lets mind roam freely and irreverently, speculates, analyzes	Intellectuality: "My past economic insecurities have led me to a degree of petty stinginess."	Intellectualizing: "My stinginess can be explained by my upbringing."
Means-end symbolization: Analyzes causal texture of experiences and problems	Logical analysis: "Let's start at the beginning and figure out what happened."	Rationalization: "I was trying at first, but one thing after another happened."
	Reflexive-intrceptive Processes	
	Tolerance of ambiguity: "There are some matters that can't be resolved when you want them to be."	Doubt: "It's the decisions that get me; I don't know what will happen if I choose to do it."
	Empathy: "I think I know how you feel" (second person agrees that first speaker does).	Projection: "Don't think I don't know what you have in mind" (second person surprised and mildly guilty).
Time reversion: Recaptures and replays past experiences—cognitive, affective, social	Regression—ego: "Let's brainstorm this for a while."	Regression: "I just can't deal with this; I'll just give up."
	Attention-focusing Processes	
	Concentration: "I intend to work on this job now, and I'll worry about that later."	Denial: "Every cloud has a silver lining, so there's no reason to be concerned."
	Affective-impulse Regulating Processes	
Diversion: Emotions expressed	Sublimation: Person expresses emotions, both positive and negative, toward objects, people, and activities in relevant and understood ways	Displacement: Person displaces emotions from the instigating situation to express them in another situation of greater safety
Transformation: Primitive	Substitution: Person appears to have thoroughly and comfortably transformed uncivil feelings into their socialized forms	Reaction formation: Persons reactions are so socialized that they seem strained, excessive and brittle
Restraint: Emotions restrained	Suppression: Person restrains emotions when their expression would be dysfunctional, but knows what she or he feels and what she or he is doing	Repression: Person curtails cognitive knowledge and reactions, irrespective of her or his condition and the situation, but emotions are free-floating

^aAdapted from N. Haan, *Coping and Defending*. New York: Academic Press, 1977, with permission.

Norma Haan, Eliane Aerts, Bruce A.B. Cooper, On Moral Grounds (New York: New York University Press, 1985), 129-130.

The Experiments and the Conclusions

Testing these moral grounds has been a complicated matter. The premise of interactional theory is that there are a number of situational as well as personal factors which influence moral action and development. This suggests research designs which are complex from the perspectives of both the psychological professional and the layperson. Given the scope of this chapter as well as a realistic estimate of the author's ability to conduct a detailed analysis of the design and execution of the various investigations of the above hypotheses, I hope nonetheless to provide an overview of the experiments and the findings.

It is fair to say at the outset of these descriptions that the theory which Haan and others have developed is largely a response to the theory of cognitive development, particularly that advanced by Lawrence Kohlberg. This explains the constant reference to comparative findings for the cognitive model of moral development. I will discuss this later when I situate the interactional theory among other theories of moral development and action. As one will notice in the descriptions which follow, both design and conclusions have often been articulated in relation to design and conclusions of the cognitive proposal.

Because the interactional theory adopts action as the primary determinant of morality, the experiments under the direction of Norma Haan sought to test moral action rather than strictly moral reasoning. I refer here to three major

studies by Haan and her associates: In the first study, Haan recruited a number of friendship groups of adolescents to participate both in moral discussions of hypothetical situations and moral games in which subjects interacted among one another. Haan conducted a second, very similar but more detailed study with first-year university students. The third study to which I refer was a study of preschoolers' moral actions and emotions in one of the games which the other groups had played, "Prisoner's Dilemma."²²

In the first and second studies, adolescents and first-year university students were divided into groups of ten participants, which were relatively homogeneous in personal background and divided equally between genders. An initial interview consisted of an assessment of the participant's "moral level" according to Kohlberg's scheme. Additionally, participants evaluated other members in the group according to personal qualities such as "makes penetrating arguments, dominates, is fair, and is straightforward." After agreeing to do so at the interview, they also took the California Psychological Inventory (CPI), completing and returning it by the first session. Some of the groups then played moral games which involved differing amounts of personal stress,

²² For detailed accounts of these three investigations, I refer the reader to Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of On Moral Grounds... and to David Matsumoto, Norma Haan, Gary Yabrove, Paola Theodoru, and Caroline Cooke Carney, "Preschoolers' Moral Actions and Emotions in Prisoner's Dilemma," Developmental Psychology [unpublished]

while others engaged in discussions of hypothetical moral dilemmas. A typical moral game was "Starpower," in which

Players were randomly divided into three initial subgroups, identified as the Circles, Triangles, and Squares. They individually traded chips of different colors and values to achieve series of chips that were worth varying number of points. Players with more points moved to the "highest" of the three subgroups, the Squares. After several trading sessions, the leader passed control of the game over to the Squares, who then invariably imposed new oppressive rules. As a result, they unthinkingly constructed, to their own advantage, a three-tiered society where possibilities for "socioeconomic" mobility soon vanished. Play usually ended with the lower groups rebelling and refusing to play. The essential moral issue was the conflict between the self-serving stance of the Squares as opposed to the plight of the lower groups, the Triangles and the Circles.²³

A typical hypothetical dilemma was the following:

At the end of routine questioning by an FBI agent about a security clearance for a former roommate, Bill is asked whether his roommate had ever been involved with illegal drugs. Bill recalls that one time -- and one time only -- his roommate came in late, very excited because he had just earned \$500 for delivering heroin from one address to another. Should Bill tell the FBI agent?²⁴

Although a staff person facilitated the gaming sessions, the course of the game was determined by the participants. The discussion sessions were conducted by a staff leader who followed procedures outlined by Kohlberg's method of moral "education," i.e., exposure to higher levels of reasoning. In both cases, a number of other trained staff members assigned numerical valuations to particular

²³ Haan, et. al., On Moral Grounds..., 87. See pages 86-88 for descriptions of other moral games.

²⁴ Ibid., 89.

group dynamics in order to measure the collective variables effecting moral action and growth. Of special interest to the eventual interpretation of the findings was the characterization of given groups as "led" groups, i.e., those whose proceedings were led by a member of the group who had received high ratings from peers for both leadership and fairness, and "dominated" groups, i.e., those whose proceedings were dominated by a member of the group who had received a sufficient number of "dominant" ratings by peers. Following the series of games and discussions, participants returned for a second interview within two weeks of the end of the series and a third interview three to four months later. In both of the follow-up interviews, participants discussed and resolved hypothetical dilemmas for the purpose of assessing their moral "growth."

In the study involving preschoolers, similar gaming took place. Nineteen dyads of four-year-olds with varying degrees of friendship (as evaluated by teachers) participated in a cognitively-simplified version of one of the games, "Prisoner's Dilemma." In the game, each of the players is equally rewarded for equal cooperation with his or her opponent, but each also has the opportunity on a given turn to default on agreements with opponents in order to receive a greater reward than the opponent. Examining the possible moral acts of equalization, reparation, stalemate, default and betrayal in conjunction with emotions measured by facial expressions, the tests revealed a

positive correlation between friendship and sensitive moral action, even though the verbalization skills of the children were limited.

To provide complete results of the studies is beyond the focus of this chapter. (I hope that I do not commit radical injustice to the memory of Norma Haan and the superior work of her associates by not reporting the findings in all their statistical elegance.) Suffice it to say that accounts in both On Moral Grounds: The Search for Practical Morality and in "Preschoolers' Moral Actions and Emotions in Prisoner's Dilemma" support the predictions derived from the interactional proposal with comprehensive statistical analyses. The following are strong conclusions of the investigations:

1) Perhaps the most significant conclusion is that in all three of the investigations, parties exhibited incidences of equalization, reparation, stalemate, default and betrayal. These five regular features of interactional morality surfaced regardless of age. This would tend to support two theses: First, interactional morality adequately describes the elements of a common, "practical" morality which is a "far simpler but more general and perhaps more fundamental moral impulsion than proposed in other systems."²⁵ Second, moral "development" is well conceptualized by the interactional proposal as increasing skills of dialogical action rather than by the concepts

²⁵ Haan, "Moral Development and Action...", 37.

offered in other theories. Indeed, in commenting upon the presence of the "capacity to operate at morally sensitive levels" in the preschoolers, Haan states that we might attribute a seeming moral incapacity in young persons to mere vulnerability to stress, thus leaving us with the question, "What does actually develop in the phenomena we have taken to be moral development?"²⁶ It may very well be "a) the maturing of problem-solving capacities that then reduce moral conflict and stress vulnerability as well as b) the increasing cognitive and factual complexity of social situations wherein the young are expected and themselves expected to act. In this case it could be that the young only seem to have increased their moral capacity."²⁷

2) Students who participated in led rather than dominated groups and students who "coped," i.e., avoided defensiveness, had higher interactional and lower cognitive moral scores. Haan's interpretation is that:

Interactional morality seems to describe the ways these students acted when their circumstances were optimal and when they could cope. Interactional morality may therefore be the way that people prefer to deal with moral problems.²⁸

In addition, it was noted in the groups that a number of the men had very high cognitive scores when they were under stress, and that low interactional scores accompanied these cognitive scores. Two interpretations follow from this:

²⁶ Ibid., 26.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Haan, et. al., On Moral Grounds..., 213-214.

Although interactional morality may be closer to the morality that people cherish, cognitive morality may be the method some people use when they are personally threatened.²⁹

Second, in regard to the correlation between cognitive morality with men and interactional morality with women,

In action situations, the women seemed to use either form of morality, whereas some men who are characteristically defensive, had higher cognitive scores when they were stressed.³⁰

The second finding is of great interest to those who are currently studying the relationship of higher levels of cognitive morality with the male gender. A current widespread criticism of Kohlberg's scheme is that because the theory was tested with an all-male sample, it does not account for a possible difference in women's moral decision-making. Carol Gilligan has noted such a difference in her studies of women seeking abortions and has ascribed the consistently "lower" moral levels among women to a differing operative morality for women, an ethic of "care and responsibility"³¹ which eludes measurement by Kohlberg's standards. Haan's finding is less sweeping but perhaps more accurate: Men may be typically given to defending themselves from stress in a cognitive way, and they indeed become proficient at it. But this may have as much to do with personality-related responses to stress as with gender.

²⁹ Ibid., 214.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982)

This suggests that there are other ways than Gilligan's ground-breaking attempt to explain the phenomenon prompted by Kohlberg's theoretical deficiencies. As Norma Haan once told me of Gilligan's theory, "I am suspicious of any morality which puts one half of the population at odds with the other."

3) As for the findings of interactional morality itself, four conclusions are worthy of our attention:³² First, according to moral ratings done by outside observers, students who coped and avoided defensiveness had higher moral action scores. It is clear that the interactional "mode" of dialogue produces significantly higher moral action scores. Second, of the ten coping and defending ego processes, certain processes were consistently associated with moral action in positive and negative ways. They included "intellectuality (a free consideration of possibilities), empathy, and suppression (not repression) of emotions; and negatively: isolation (separating related facts [from] facts or related feelings), intellectualizing, and displacement (taking negative emotions out on others)."³³

In other words, higher moral action occurred when the young people considered all possible solutions within the context of being concerned for their protagonists and regulating their own feelings. At the same time they needed to get the situation

³² For a complete description of the findings described in this section, see the discussion of "Moral Action" in Haan, "Moral Development and Action...", 31-38.

³³ Ibid., 33.

"together" in their minds on a real, not intellectualized basis and refrain from accusing their protagonist for their present difficulties.³⁴

This points to the nature of the dialogue which produces moral action from an interactional perspective. It is not just any dialogue which can make that claim. For example, a shouting match between two intransigent parties would seem to encourage precisely the kinds the processes negatively associated with moral action. Such "dialogue" would at the very least not promote moral action and may actually thwart it.

Third, two situational factors had correlations with higher moral scores in the gaming sessions for the first-year university students. Scores were higher when the premises of the game were distant from the experience of the student and vicarious in nature. No correlations were significant for discussions. Congruent with intuition, this scientific conclusion suggests that while in the crucible of immediate and personally-involving circumstances, people may discern a course of action much differently than if they had the luxury of coolly considering the problem from the stance of the "armchair quarterback." Finally, the game groups which were designated both by group members and outside evaluators as led (facilitated by leadership skills inherent in all the members) were "consistently more integrative and communal while the dominated groups (dominated by one or

³⁴ Ibid.

more members) were more "disintegrated and hierarchical in their functioning. In turn, the led game groups consistently produced higher moral action scores. Group structure had no effect on the staff-led discussion groups.³⁵ This conclusion suggests that the discernment dynamic, the "interpersonal context" itself, effects the quality of moral discernment and action. In her summary statement Haan points to the relative effects of situational factors in the discernment context itself: "Of all significant variance for five sessions, the students' situationally-invoked ego processing accounted for 41%, gaming or discussing for 31%, habitual or characteristic ego processing for 19% and group designation as dominated or led for 9%."³⁶

II. Contextualizing the Social-Interactional Proposal

Given the description above, we would do well to situate the social-interactional proposal for morality within the broader field of moral psychology to which we alluded in the first chapter. We will do this in three ways. First, we will submit the social-interactional proposal to the three questions which we posed to the "classical" theories of moral psychology: What is morality and how does it emerge in the person? What are the philosophical and anthropological underpinnings of the

³⁵ Ibid., 35.

³⁶ Ibid.

theory? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the theory? Second, we will compare and contrast Haan's interactional view of morality with the three classical theories. Finally, we will examine what critics have said about the work of Haan and her associates.

Three Questions for the Interactional Proposal:
Content, Background and Evaluation

In response to the first of these questions, "What is morality and how does it emerge in the person?" we can briefly summarize the above section, highlighting the major features of the interactional notion of morality. Morality is primarily the equalization of relations between parties who represent two or more positions in a circumstance of moral judgment and/or action. As we have noted above, those "parties" may be people, a person and society, or ambivalent positions existing within the mind of a person who is in the process of discernment. Equalization is constituted by an equilibrium which is achieved through a process of dialogue. In the moral dialogue, parties participate freely in making their own positions known and understood, both cognitively and affectively. Each party, too, comes to know and understand the other's position and responds accordingly. As such, morality is the action of dialogue. More accurately, morality is action responding to action, with the measure of morality resting upon the quality of the interaction. This interaction is multi-dimensional, i.e., not only cognitive as well as affective, but also dependent

upon variables such as situational factors, the ego processes involved and the dynamic of the interaction itself.

Conceived as interaction, then, morality emerges within the person as increasingly adequate dialogical skills of exposition and resolution. These skills are the problem-solving skills upon which one calls for any decision. They accrue according to recurrence of the "successful" resolution of circumstances requiring equalization of parties and positions. But whether these skills are what "develops" when we speak of "moral development" is still dubious according to the experiments supporting the interactional proposal. Nonetheless, the interactionist presupposition is that from the earliest age the child possesses and exhibits basic impulses toward reciprocity and cooperation; these impulses are realized and refined as growth occurs in a social setting. Moral responses are constructed by the agent in a dialogical forum and retained as responses which "work." Therefore, social-emotional experience is key to development, as is participation. Although one may speak of "levels" which characterize this development, it is a gradual process which cannot be portrayed in invariant sequential stages.

Second, what are the philosophical or anthropological underpinnings of the interactional proposal? As we have seen, Haan joins a movement within the social sciences in which scientists make known the normative assumptions from

which they proceed; in this case, she states the "moral ground" upon which her theory stands: equalization of relationships. Noting "compatibility" with Alexander Sesonske's theory of human duty and obligation arising from membership in a community,³⁷ Haan implicitly claims Sesonske's "ground" as her own.³⁸ Included in Sesonske's theory are the following fundamental assertions: 1) Obligations arise from situations and they are established as people make commitments to each other. 2) We are all indebted to communities for the aid we receive and the moral growth they engender. Without them, we could not be human or moral. 3) Rights have no meaning outside of communities. When a person claims a right, he or she recognizes that all others in the community have the same right.³⁹ At least initially, then, we can make the statement that Haan's is a social view of humanity, i.e, by virtue of our participation in relationships with others, we grow and "develop."

In addition, by its emphasis on affective, cognitive and situational factors, the interactional proposal reflects

³⁷ See Alexander Sesonske, Value and Obligation: The Foundation of an Empiricist Ethical Theory (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1957)

³⁸ It is important to note, however, that Haan, Aerts and Cooper would not say that Alexander Sesonske provides the premise for the interactional proposal, as Judith Smetana has charged in her review of On Moral Grounds... in Contemporary Psychology, 32, no. 5 (1987): 423-424. In a response to the review, they stated openly and succinctly, "Smetana errs in attributing to Alexander Sesonske the premises of the interactional theory we propose."

³⁹ As cited in Haan, et. al, On Moral Grounds..., 26-27.

a multidimensional view of humanity which reflects the comprehensive nature of human morality. Because persons are conceived as moral actors and responders in this scheme, human moral agency is subjective, creative and constructive. Moreover, the human condition is fluent according to this formulation of practical morality; persons are free to respond according to the demands of each social situation. Finally, in its stress on the earliest presence of moral impulses toward reciprocity and cooperation, the social interactional proposal proceeds from a "positive" view of humanity in the sense that there are no inherent obstacles toward realization of these moral impulses.

In addressing the last of our questions, "What are the advantages and disadvantages of this particular theory?" I refer to two criteria: the adequacy of the interactional proposal as it might be judged methodologically and the potential "usefulness" of this perspective in the development of my own theory regarding pastoral moral discernment in the Roman Catholic tradition. The first prominent advantage of the theory is that the interactional proposal describes morality in terms of everyday interactions rather than in terms of the rarified occasions of moral reasoning which are prompted by significant dilemmas in people's lives. This is not only a sound methodological procedure from the standpoint of moral psychology (see, for example, the interactional critique of Kohlberg's scheme below), it is also the cornerstone of

"pastoral" theological theory -- i.e., an operative theology is best forged from the insights of everyday life. Haan and her associates have distinguished themselves from other theorists of morality by their willingness to pursue empirically the basic descriptive question, "What is morality?" while others, attempting to formulate "best" normative theories of morality, have settled for answering the derivative question "Why be moral?" To study the former, to begin with actual, common moral impulses as they are exhibited in the everyday world is, as Haan has cited, to "rebuild our raft plank by plank while we are at sea."⁴⁰ It is a risky venture, subject to much methodological revision. But it stands to be an eminently valuable theory, both for the advance of the psychological perspective on morality and for "pastoral" theology's appropriation of it.

Moreover, this phenomenological approach echoes some of the best instincts of the natural law tradition which I have outlined above. The study of moral "impulses" and "common" morality redounds to the premise of natural law. However remotely it is conceived, it is congruent with a traditional "Catholic" view of ethics. The positive, humanistic approach which accents the goodness evident even in young children is likewise a hallmark of "Catholic" moral anthropology.

⁴⁰ Otto Neurath, as cited by Haan in Haan, et.al., Social Science as Moral Inquiry, 236.

In my limited exposure to moral psychology, I note only a few disadvantages of the theory from the perspective of the discipline of psychology. First, the studies may not account well enough for the background of the participants. While some biographical information was gathered, one can question whether it was enough to address the importance of sufficiently determining the stance of the various persons participating in the dialogue. That is, one weakness of the interactional proposal as it stands is that it tends to suggest that persons pursuing the moral balance come to the encounter as completely pliable partners in the dialogue. Since one cannot presume a "blank slate" position, the criticism must be taken seriously. Second, the highest age group against which the interaction proposal was tested was undergraduate students. This seems to limit the claim that interactional morality is the "common" morality, as some might assert that college-age persons are not sufficiently integrated moral agents to test such a claim. Finally, a limited disadvantage of the acceptability of the theory in Catholic circles is its wholehearted approval of the situational nature of morality. This is a limited disadvantage because in the past decade, the villifying charge of "situation ethics" has been reduced in frequency and intensity in Catholic circles. Although Joseph Fletcher's thesis⁴¹ provided fodder for Catholic critics of

⁴¹ See Joseph Fletcher, Situation Ethics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966)

virtually every stripe when it was originally promulgated, and indeed, his own particular method of doing the "loving thing" is still found to be wanting, his basic insight about accounting for context in moral discernment has gained in general acceptance among Catholic moral theologians. Nonetheless, a suspicion prevails about any theory of morality which downplays such traditional "givens" as virtue and character and accents the particular features of moral action. Despite the acceptance of "pastoral" solutions to moral problems, situationism draws mistrust. I hope to address this difficulty in Chapter 5. We will examine other methodological advantages and disadvantages of the theory in the last part of this section, "What the Critics Say."

Comparison and Contrast: The Social-Interactional Proposal and Three Classical Psychological Theories

As is witnessed by the very premise upon which the interactional proposal is founded, Haan was drawn forward in her work by the prospect of a psychological theory of morality which reflected the actual morality of everyday life. To that end, she both incorporated and rejected some of the basic insights of other psychological theories. In our efforts to contextualize the interactional proposal, we do well, then, to compare and contrast the interactional theory with the classical theories I have characterized above, specifically noting how various elements of these

propositions stand in relation to social-interactional morality.

The psychoanalytic perspective offers the superego as the seat of morality, with its primary function that of controlling the instincts of the id. Control constitutes the central feature of morality because these instincts are selfish and need to be tempered for the individual to live in society. The superego makes collective life possible through the censure with which it guides the action of the ego. Psychoanalytic theory suggests that collective life would be impossible without the censorship of individual needs. The interactional proposal is much more optimistic about the human condition. Acknowledging impulses toward reciprocity and cooperation present from birth, it builds its theory on much more positive moral grounds. The essence of morality in the psychoanalytic perspective is the internalization of parental prohibitions about the gratification of individual needs.

In the interactional proposal, the realization of one's potential for reciprocity is the essence of morality. Although the social interactionists recognize the possibility of obstacles to that realization, these obstacles are not conceived as inherent human selfishness but instead as circumstances which thwart moral action. The "circumstances" may indeed be the presence of characteristic defense mechanisms on the part of an individual, but they are not construed as inherent flaws.

As we have seen, in the interactional proposal, morality contains a number of factors, including the ego processes of the individual, the situation, the dynamic of the dialogue and the accrued moral skills of the parties involved. As such, it is much more akin to the Eriksonian formulation of the psychoanalytic perspective than the Freudian formulation which places the emphasis on the individual's resolution of the Oedipal complex. While Erikson sees the individual responding to environmental cues, drawing upon latent strengths, and thereby resolving a number of conflicts which enable moral action, Freud sees the individual responding to a fixed and powerful constellation of authoritarian influences.

The psychoanalytic tradition, then, sees morality as a response to standards of authority. The super-ego stands as an kind of outside observer, or as Haan puts it, a "third party" which prompts and judges the response of each of the parties. The interactional proposal, on the other hand, sees morality as the action and interaction of the parties as well as the moral balance which they forge between themselves. Again, the everyday quality of the morality proposed by the interactionists is strikingly simple and clear by contrast.

The interactional proposal has, however, appropriated a central concept from the psychoanalytic perspective. Haan employs Freud's concept of "defense mechanisms" to articulate the role of coping and defending in moral

discernment and action. By incorporating these mechanisms, Haan has demonstrated an openness to the role of the unconscious in influencing the development of interactive morality.

The cognitive proposal, put forward by Jean Piaget and refined and expanded by Lawrence Kohlberg, is rooted in the idea that moral judgment is principally a matter of moral reasoning, and like all other reasoning, it develops according to a pattern which predicts the form but not the content of that moral reasoning. (For a more detailed explanation of the cognitive proposal, see Chapter 1, section II, "Psychology and the Study of Morality.") Haan has devoted a significant part of her research, time and energy to a coherent theoretical response to Kohlberg's six-stage scheme. The core of that response is articulated in the interactional proposal. It is important to note, however, that Haan accepts and assimilates parts of the cognitive proposal. Indeed, her theory has been labeled as a variant of the cognitive-developmental tradition.⁴² Despite her departures from Kohlberg's theory, she cites a number of similarities between it and her theory, including the fact that both are constructivist theories, i.e., they see morality as "constituted, considered and decided in the

⁴² James R. Rest, "Morality," in Handbook of Child Psychology, 4th ed., Paul H. Mussen, ed., Vol. III, Cognitive Development, John H. Flavell and Ellen M. Markman, eds., (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1983), 608.

minds of people."⁴³ Additionally, both formulations allow for moral growth according to some structure, both state that human minds develop skills as interaction with experience occurs, and, standing together against the social-learning and psychoanalytic perspectives, they reject the ideas that morality is either the accumulation of behavioral responses or the result of the resolution of the Oedipal complex.⁴⁴

But the departure of Haan's interactional proposal from Kohlberg is significant and worthy of some detailed attention here. Continuing with the two criteria used in outlining the interactional proposal above, we look to notions of moral development and action according to the cognitive theory, recalling the contrast with interactional morality.⁴⁵

In Kohlberg's theory, the child in early stages is self-serving and obedient upon command, as opposed to Haan's original position for moral agents -- the morally naive child who is nonetheless disposed toward reciprocity. "Cognitive" moral development is reflected in a tight, invariant stage sequence which "recapitulates the history of moral philosophy." Haan accepts this assertion in regard to the development of logic, but says that "children do not

⁴³ Haan, et. al., On Moral Grounds, 54.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Again, see Table 4.3 and Table 4.4, Haan, et. al, On Moral Grounds..., 67 and 71.

experience such certainty in moral exchange. In contrast to logical conclusions, everyday moral conclusions are seldom wholly true or wholly false...and small sensitive differences in mood can lead to different solutions."⁴⁶ Consequently, for Haan, the "creative, inductive, particularized quality of moral discussion and solution makes it highly unlikely that the development of moral skill is accurately characterized by successive structurally homogeneous stages."⁴⁷ Naturally, then, for Kohlberg, the necessary condition for moral development is logical development, while for Haan, it is social-emotional experience.⁴⁸ Social interchange is a sufficient but not necessary element for moral development according to Kohlberg. He does acknowledge the importance of "role-taking," or social exchange with another, in the moral agent's progress through the six-stage scheme.⁴⁹ Interaction is necessary but not sufficient for moral development according to Haan. Kohlberg sees the motivation for moral development as a comparison with others' higher stage thinking. But for Haan, it is the simpler, more generalized need to see oneself as moral and the desire to

⁴⁶ Ibid., 60.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 61.

⁴⁸ Norma Haan, Richard Weiss and Vicky Johnson, "The Role of Logic in Moral Reasoning and Development," Developmental Psychology 18, no. 2 (1982): 245-256.

⁴⁹ Lawrence Kohlberg, The Philosophy of Moral Development (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981) See pp. 141-142.

forge understandings that work better. The vehicle for change in Kohlberg's formulation is cognitive disequilibrium, and the recommended educational strategy reflects this -- exposure to higher stage moral reasoning. For Haan, social/intersubjective disequilibrium provides this vehicle,⁵⁰ and the recommended educational strategy is the opportunity to participate in moral experiences. Finally, because of the basic regard for deductive thinking in Kohlberg, historical moral principles could be employed as first premises in making moral decisions. As we have noted, Haan sees a more creative, inductive, selective use of these principles.

When we consider moral action in the two schemes, we see a similar stark contrast. Perhaps the most telling contrast is the context for moral action. In Kohlberg, the context is highly individual. By its very premise, the interactional formulation sees a dialogue between parties as the context. In Kohlberg's scheme, the process of action is a deductive determination of applicable principles, and the capacity for enactment is predicated on a person's acquired stage of moral development. In Haan's scheme, the process of action is agreement among the parties involved, and the capacities for moral enactment, as we have seen above, are many: the person's moral skill, the nature of the dialogue,

⁵⁰ Norma Haan, "Processes of Moral Development: Cognitive or Social Equilibrium?" Developmental Psychology 21, no. 6 (1985): 996-1006.

the amount of stress present and the adequacy of the solutions.

How might we summarize all of this? In relation to Kohlberg's cognitive theory, Haan's interactional theory of practical common morality is more oriented toward action as the determinant of morality, rather than reasoning and verbalization; it is more comprehensive in its view of circumstantial factors which influence morality, such as emotions and group dynamics; it is more interested in the overtly social features of morality; and it is more fluent in its understanding of acceptable solutions to moral problems. Space does not allow an extensive consideration of methodological considerations. Suffice it to say, however, that insofar as Haan has sought to test and describe practical morality, by having subjects participate in games, i.e., by observing them in settings of real moral action, her method fits her claims. Kohlberg's theory has been criticized for its limited usefulness in describing a practical common morality because its claims must be realistically tied to its methodological focus -- verbalization of moral reasoning about hypothetical dilemmas.

Haan's focus on action provides a natural transition to our discussion of the relationship between the interactional proposal and the social-learning perspective on morality. The social-learning theorists stress action and behavior as the key determinants of morality, discarding moral reasoning

as the indicator. Social-learning theorists see morality as an agent's internalization of the behavioral cues of a given environment. This presumes an original position of "tabula rasa" for the child, and it conceptually opens the way for the "doctrine of specificity," which states that situational factors influence morality to the point that any notion of "character," or constancy of content in moral capacity, is suspect. As we have seen above, the interactional proposal shares the critical perspective that action must be the central criterion in measuring and describing morality.

Like the social-learning theorists, Haan sees the incompleteness of the study of moral reasoning as the indicator of moral action and development. She also shares the stress on situational induction in morality. But the interactional proposal parts company with the social-learning perspective in two important ways. First, the original position of the agent is not the mere neutrality of "tabula rasa." Haan sees the agent as exhibiting impulses toward reciprocity and cooperation from the beginning. The self's constructive, creative claims are to be weighed in the balance with the claims of other parties, including society, and this leads to the second departure. Although the social interactional proposal would allow for the influence of society, the agent is not at the mercy of certain mores and customs, but by virtue of having constructed his or her own moral understandings, participates in dialogue with those societal values.

What Do the Critics Say About
the Interactional Proposal for Morality?

In this last of our discussions contextualizing the interactional proposal, we look beyond my earlier "advantages and disadvantages" to criticisms leveled against the theory from other psychologists and philosophers of morality and, where possible, responses to those criticisms from Haan and her associates. I have organized those criticisms into four major areas:

First, the "moral ground" of the interactional proposal -- equalization of relations. In her review of On Moral Grounds..., Judith Smetana takes issue with "assumptions that are not well defended."⁵¹ Leading these assumptions is the charge that Haan et. al. "presume that equalization of relationships, rather than justice is 'the moral ground that all endorse.'" (It is well noted that the quotation is condensed by Smetana, and the authors have nuanced the assumption more than the reviewer suggests.) Smetana states that this assumption is not well defended, noting that the theory does not adequately account for hierarchical relationships, teacher-student and parent-child, for example, which are not immoral in and of themselves. Haan has since accounted for these hierarchical relationships as legitimated imbalances, non-legitimated imbalances, and false balances based upon various factors.⁵²

⁵¹ Smetana, 424.

⁵² See Haan, "Moral Development and Action...", 12-16.

Smetana also raises the issue of the presumptive claim by Haan et. al. that action is the criterion by which true morality is determined. Smetana states that no such claim can be made. Instead, she argues that "there are only choices about where the study of morality ought to begin" and that "studying only moral action is just as inadequate as studying only the development of moral judgment."⁵³ Haan has made eminently clear that choices about the starting point of morality need to be made. So far as the singular concentration on action is concerned, it is largely a methodological concern, not one of presupposition, as Smetana suggests. As Haan has succinctly stated, "Surely action is nearer to being the litmus test for bona fide morality, and we need to be reasonably clear about what develops before we can say how it develops."⁵⁴

A third criticism by Smetana of Haan et. al. with regard to presumptions of the study is that the authors warn readers about uncritically accepting the findings of the scientific study of morality and then propose their own scientific study of morality. Haan, Aerts and Cooper respond, seeing no contradiction:

...our caution to "citizens" as consumers of research on morality applies also, of course, to our own work. Yet, to ask the consumer to approach scientific evidence in the field of moral research with a grain of scepticism and still

⁵³ Smetana, 424.

⁵⁴ Haan, et. al., On Moral Grounds..., 53.

argue for a new line of scientific investigation is not contradictory. Advances in knowledge for the lay person and the scientist alike depend on the presence of both pursuits.⁵⁵

It is interesting that more is not made of the "grounds" on which the interactional proposal is built. It might be fair to say that by explicitly stating the premises from which they move forward, the authors have genuinely satisfied a scientific community which increasingly appreciates such statements of normative assumptions.

Second, methodological criticisms. Several substantive methodological concerns have been raised by critics. Despite Don Locke's overall evaluation of Haan et. al.'s study as "bound to be a classic in the field," he makes two incisive negative criticisms of the method of the study. First, he notes that Haan's dilemmas are at least as hypothetical as Kohlberg's:

...with luck I will no more be called on to decide whether to admit a contaminated outsider to my fall-out shelter [a Haan dilemma] than to decide whether to steal to save my wife's life [a Kohlberg dilemma].⁵⁶

Second, Locke takes issue with what Haan has termed moral "action." Noting that Haan has set out to make up for a

⁵⁵ Haan, Norma, Aerts, Eliane and Cooper, Bruce, "More on the Grounds for Research and Moral Action," (Response to Smetana review) Contemporary Psychology 33, no. 3 (1988): 275.

⁵⁶ Don Locke, review of On Moral Grounds: The Search for Practical Morality, by Norma Haan, Eliane Aerts and Bruce A.B. Cooper, In The London Times Higher Education Supplement, June 20, 1986, 18.

major fault of the Kohlberg scheme, i.e., the gap between what people think and do in regard to morality, he writes,

...she is no more concerned with action as such than is Kohlberg himself. Instead, she uses "moral action" interchangeably with "moral interaction"; what she means by moral action is not...acting morally or immorally (doing the right or wrong thing) but moral discussion, communication and decision-making; or as she puts it, anything that is more than just private thought.⁵⁷

But it is well noted that for Haan, action is a broader category than merely behavior. Moral decision-making is action which includes cognitive and emotional, verbal as well as non-verbal features. In an effort to study the non-verbal features of it, Haan has begun to study the moral interactions of four year-olds, who tend to be less verbal in their moral action.

Smetana, too, criticizes Haan et. al.'s research design for measuring moral action, questioning whether the games which subjects played actually approximate "real-life moral decision-making." But Haan and her associates claim that in viewing the videotapes of the game-playing, one can gain an appreciation for the fact that in the course of the games, actual cognitive and emotional, verbal and non-verbal features are evidenced, and that video records of the game sessions may be as close as to a real moral situation as it is possible to ascertain empirically.

Locke's significant criticism of her claims about moral action notwithstanding, he praises Haan's theory :

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Haan's theory is not, as she presents it, a theory of moral action as opposed to moral reasoning... Instead, her theory is an alternative theory of moral reasoning as communication and dialogue, not individual ratiocination, as solving conflicts between individuals not conflicts within them. This is in itself an important corrective to Kohlberg's excessively individualistic and, it has to be said, authoritarian analysis.⁵⁸

The only amendment Haan might make to such a favorable judgment is that in her interactional proposal, she would also aspire to describe the moral conflicts "within" a person, seeing the positions within an agent's mind as "parties" which respond to the process and outcome of equalization.

Third, the relationship of the interactional proposal to Kohlberg's theory. Smetana reads Haan's interactional proposal as an effort to "debunk" Lawrence Kohlberg. Indeed, Robert Goodin calls Kohlberg "Haan's sometime coauthor."⁵⁹ Smetana facilely asserts that Haan only uses Kohlberg as a "foil" rather than a serious comparison, but Haan has responded that "we sought to compare our proposal with this influential moral theory. This seems a customary way for scientific work to proceed."⁶⁰ Beyond this criticism, Smetana makes an excellent point in showing that although Haan et. al. repeatedly refer to "the cognitivists," they only cite Kohlberg as a reference:

⁵⁸ Locke, 18.

⁵⁹ Robert E. Goodin, review of On Moral Grounds: The Search for Practical Morality, by Norma Haan, Eliane Aerts and Bruce A.B. Cooper, In Ethics 97 (January 1987): 494.

⁶⁰ From the response to the Smetana review.

...they do not examine various cognitive theories. Although Kohlberg might find their results surprising, other cognitive-developmentalists would not. Such oversights seriously weaken the comparisons the authors intend to make.⁶¹

Fourth, the coherence of the theory. Finally, Goodin and Locke allude to the rather complex presentation of the social interactional proposal for morality in On Moral Grounds... For Goodin, it is a matter of style and editing, and he does not comment on the content as such. Locke makes the more substantive observation that much is covered within the rubric of the interactional proposal: "the differences between Haan's conception and Kohlberg's; ...the effect on moral performance of the situation as against individual character or personality; the effects of different types of situation and different types of group, and of differing personal strategies -- coping versus defensive...; the development of interactional morality from childhood to early adulthood; and the nature and effects of different types of family background." Nonetheless, Locke's positive assessment of this welter of material is that

If the result is to leave the reader somewhat overwhelmed by the sheer complexity of the material and issues, then that is in itself a valuable corrective to the sometimes over-⁶² simplistic analyses of existing approaches.

Such an evaluation seems to appreciate the efforts of attempts to describe a "practical morality," i.e., one which by definition is comprehensive in its scope.

⁶¹ Smetana, 424.

⁶² Locke, 18.

III. Implications of the Social-Interactional Proposal

Having examined a representation of the content and the context of the interactional proposal, as well as a critical review of it, we turn to a brief prospectus of the implications of the theory for my own thesis regarding pastoral moral discernment in the Roman Catholic tradition. This discussion of implications will be repeated at the conclusion of our presentation of John Macmurray's and James Gustafson's theories in preparation for the actual dialogue between the theories, which will take place in Chapter Five.

But first, I shall return to explain in more detail ideas posed in the introduction so that the reader might appreciate the implications of the interactional theory of Haan, as well as those of John Macmurray and James Gustafson. Specifically, what do I mean by "pastoral moral discernment"? I mean the consideration of a personal situation in a Catholic ministerial setting by which a moral course of action is determined. Specifically, the consideration is often in the form of conversational dialogue. The situation is a conflict which makes claims on our values and convictions. The ministerial setting is some Catholic church-sponsored environment or occasion in which a minister may be clearly identified as representing a religious tradition. The moral course of action is some concrete behavior to be enacted. The determination is both

the process of discriminating among viable options as well as the outcome, i.e., the agreement which is reached.

It is the privilege and challenge of pastoral ministers to provide moral vision and guidance to other believers. Those in the Church who are charged with the formulation of moral teaching and ethical theory often do not enjoy the pastoral minister's wealth of experience in this regard. Consequently, there frequently exists a gap between official Roman moral teachings and the corresponding solutions to moral problems which are forged everyday in pastoral settings. The problems are diverse: A divorced man seeks to remarry and remain a "practicing" Catholic; a couple wishes to practice artificial birth control and raise "a Catholic family"; a long-standing, monogamous homosexual couple wants to know the status of their relationship "in the eyes of the Church;" a woman forced to consider the withholding of nutrition of her terminally ill husband seeks the counsel of a pastoral team member in a Catholic hospital. There are, of course a host of issues in these cases which require clear thinking on the part of those formulating moral teaching and ethical rationale for the teaching. But sooner or later, these teachings must be interpreted and applied to the particular circumstances of people's lives, and this interpretation and application often happens in "pastoral moral discernment."

I am interested in the dynamics of this pastoral moral discernment. My own background as a pastoral minister in

the Catholic tradition has led me to the basic insight that these pastoral solutions are not peripheral but central to the moral life of the Church. This discernment is not merely a derivative activity. We stand to learn much from the process and the outcomes of moral discernment as assisted and enabled by pastoral ministers. As I have contended in the introduction, this pastoral discernment process may be the most credible arena of moral leadership in the Church, valuable not only to those directly involved in the discernment process, but also valuable to those who promulgate "official" moral teaching and to moral theologians as well. Moreover, the discernment process itself is not morally neutral activity. That is, in addition to the content of the discussion, the form of the process is of moral interest. How the pastoral minister proceeds in moral discernment is a matter of method, but it is also a matter of a guiding ethic. This might be construed as a professional ethic, but it is really more than that. Because this pastoral encounter draws upon our fundamental beliefs about Church, ministry, and our lives of faith, it is really a foundational ethic which guides this pastoral encounter. Therefore, as we have laid out the project above, we seek to develop a "critical method" as well as a "foundational ethic" for that discernment, based upon psychological, philosophical and theological theories of social interaction.

In the last chapter, we established the warrants for the use of psychology in moral reflection, drawing upon the natural law tradition as well as official magisterial teachings. We agreed that empirical science in general and psychology in particular stood to offer the Catholic tradition important insights about the moral life, and we briefly explored some of the extant theories of moral psychology, suggesting their contributions to the overall view of the human moral life.

Focusing our discussion, we now look to Haan et. al.'s social-interactional theory and its implications for establishing a critical method and a foundational ethic for pastoral moral discernment in the Catholic tradition. What contributions can Norma Haan and her associates make in our project?

The first important contribution of the interactional theory of morality is that it bears out the idea that dialogue is a form of moral action. As we have seen above, Haan has answered and corrected her critics' contentions that dialogue is still just talk. Haan insists that the act of dialogue is itself moral activity, that the movement from divergent positions to agreement is more than "winning" or "losing" due to moral superiority or deficiency on the part of each of the partners. Agreement, or "equalization," is a process and an outcome which is morality. This claim is central to my thesis. Pastoral moral discernment as we know it in the Roman Catholic tradition is not simply the

opportunity for the minister to pass along the moral teaching of the magisterium, although that may occur. It is not merely an occasion for the minister to act as a mouthpiece, but instead to be a participant in a moral enterprise which Haan has termed "equalization." Theories of moral theology which stress that pastoral solutions are merely matters of moral "compromise" do not account for this fundamental insight of Haan's work.

Haan's emphasis on morality as an inductive activity also has significant implications for pastoral moral discernment. According to the interactional theory, morality is a constructive and particularized activity, responsive to the special demands of a situation through the "creative" use of historical moral principles.⁶³ At the heart of the pastoral approach to ethics is the same recognition that particular circumstances must be accounted for and respected. It is very difficult to generalize such an inductive method of ethics without entering the thicket of "situation ethics," and, indeed, there are moral norms which are helpfully used in applied ethics. However, Haan makes an empirically-based contention that the inductive creation of a "moral balance" is the actual core of morality. This could serve as a legitimation for pastoral solutions which have been characterized as mere compromises. Again, far from being a derivative or marginal activity, pastoral moral discernment (in all of its creativity and

⁶³ Haan et. al., On Moral Grounds, 67.

particularity) reflects a fundamental ethic which cannot be dismissed as mere "situationism." By Haan's findings, when pastoral ministers account for context, individual personality traits and other particular demands of a given moral conflict, they are not evading the tenets of sound moral reflection. They are attending to the very inductive basis of morality.

Another important insight from the interactional proposal is that morality is a social and participative activity. Although this may sound obvious, other theories do not ultimately rest on this assertion. Kohlberg, for example, has constructed his stage scheme such that stages five and six cite marked individuality and autonomy as the hallmarks of the mature, moral person. Indeed, the occasion for change and upward movement through Kohlberg's stages is cognitive disequilibrium within the individual. Haan, on the other hand, sees the occasion for change and moral growth as social disequilibrium, i.e., some unevenness in relations. Recall Locke's assessment of Haan's proposal as "a theory of moral reasoning as communication and dialogue not individual ratiocination."⁶⁴

We have seen, too, that free participation is a key factor in creating a moral balance. Lack of free and equal participation is the limiting condition for moral growth in the interactional theory, and Haan has pointed out the implications of this for social ethics and for the education

⁶⁴ Locke, 18.

of the young. For example, in advocating "conditions that foster society's and individual person's moral effectiveness," Haan states that:

From the standpoint of interactional theory, the society in which participation and dialogue is possible is the epitome of moral social conditions. This is not the society of just conditions, benevolently provided or inherited. The means of participation are as critical as the ends...⁶⁵

Even in the case of the parent-child relationship, Haan notes the importance of participation on the part of children in making decisions. She is not naive about radical equality here, but she does recall the apt comment of a father who after disciplining his child, said, "We have to come down on her from time to time, but she has to walk away with her moral honor intact."⁶⁶

The social emphasis of the theory fittingly describes the root dynamic of pastoral moral discernment. It is hoped that in a pastoral encounter, the give-and-take of social interaction will provide the opportunity for clarification, motivation and moral growth. Indeed, "social-moral experience" is the necessary condition for moral growth according to Haan's theory, unlike the cognitive proposal, which relies upon logical development as the necessary condition. Logic and deduction are not abandoned in the pastoral encounter, but as pastoral ministers will attest, the quality of the social interaction itself can be a

⁶⁵ Haan, et. al., On Moral Grounds, 392.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 395.

healing and challenging occasion for better discernment and growth.

Additionally, the importance of individual social-moral experience as an indicator of moral development and as a requisite capacity for moral action makes way for similar value to be placed on the collective social experience of a community, i.e., moral wisdom wrought from the social-moral experience of many persons in common life. This would be more than a communal tradition of principles from which rules would be deduced in cognitive fashion. This would be a tradition of a moral wisdom based on the interactions and history of a community.⁶⁷ All of this is to say that a social model of moral discernment receives descriptive and prescriptive empirical support from Haan which up until now only intuition has supplied.

The stress on free participation and equal responsibility in moral dialogue also has direct implications for pastoral moral discernment. The ethic which guides the pastoral encounter dealing with a moral issue is much more open-ended than that which characterizes the formulation or presentation of moral teaching. In

⁶⁷ James T. Burtchaell is currently developing this notion of the collective experience of a community giving birth to a moral wisdom which in turn serves as a resource in moral discernment. I hope to develop this idea in a different way, from the perspective of its moral-psychological rationale, along with theoretical support from philosophical and theological sources. But I am indebted to Burtchaell for the particular term "moral wisdom" as it relates to community experience. See James T. Burtchaell, The Giving and Taking of Life: Essays Ethical (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989)

short, there must be genuine two-way communication, assimilation and integration, and nothing should impede the free participation of either party. Also, no role or status should inhibit equal regard for the positions of the parties. I am thinking here of the ideal encounter of, for example, a pastoral associate and counselee, in which the dialogue, at least in its early form, is uninhibited by deference to traditional stone-walling tactics such as citing "the Church's position," asserting that "the Church is not a democracy," or relying on clericalism for legitimacy. It is helpful to note, too, that these tactics may be employed by either party. The point is not that Church teaching or the authority of ordained ministry, for example, ought never enter the discernment process. (We will discuss this further in Chapter Six.) But as expressions of unequal power or obstacles to free participation, they would be violations of the moral grounds of this encounter as Haan understands it.

The interactional proposal also places a high premium on the value of self-interest in achieving a moral balance:

Control of selfishness is the obsessive concern of most theorists...According to the interactional perspective, society's need to control selfishness is matched by its need to facilitate and tolerate...legitimate self interests. In fact, on logical grounds, the theory would fail as a description and explanation of morality if pursuit of self-interest were not allowed. Dialogues would not⁶⁸ work and equalized balances could not be achieved.

⁶⁸ Haan, et. al., On Moral Grounds, 386.

It would seem that the pastoral encounter is and should be a place in the church in which people express and pursue legitimate self-interest in a moral matter. It is, after all, the personal, individual, particular circumstances of a situation which present complications and prompt creative solutions for persons who want to have a minister listen and respond to their own positions. Haan's theory would suggest that this is not just a preferred prevailing ethic, it is necessary for real dialogue and real moral action to occur.

Other conclusions of the interactional proposal have implications for our projected model of pastoral moral discernment in the Catholic tradition. While the findings above have implications for what we have termed the "foundational ethic" guiding that model, other findings have implications for a "critical method," the means of actually engaging in pastoral discernment which promote moral action and development. Three of those conclusions are worthy of our attention.

First, the work of Haan and her associates gives credence to the idea that moral actions and moral development are cognitive as well as affective matters. The significant improvement of the interactional proposal over the cognitive proposal of Kohlberg, for example, is that the interactional proposal recognizes that moral "reasoning" (in the broad sense) must take into account a number of other factors which we have discussed above, including the emotions, which as Haan has noted, are "essential conditions

that facilitate or deter equalizing moral action."⁶⁹ For our purposes, this is a key assertion which has strategic implications for a method of pastoral moral discernment. We can expect that the critical method we develop will prompt the minister to consider the affective dimensions of both the moral conflict and the discernment process. The strictly rational assessment or discernment of the moral conflict will be insufficient.

This assertion is borne out specifically in Haan's thesis about coping and defending. The mediation of stress through either coping or defending has definite consequences for the quality of moral action (dialogue) and development.⁷⁰ As Haan states,

Our results consistently suggested that children and people need both personal strategies and social support for dealing with conflict and stress in order to address, rather than avoid and negate, moral issues. Emotional, conflictual and stressful moral encounters fostered development, but only when the group and student were able to cope with these difficulties.⁷¹

How might this inform a method for pastoral moral discernment? In order to assist "apt, differentiated and sensitive" moral discernment, i.e., "coping," the minister would need to be aware of the stress suffered by the individual seeking help -- for example, the stress of the moment, the stress of one's background, the stress of

⁶⁹ Ibid., 71.

⁷⁰ See the discussion above on pp. 87-90.

⁷¹ Ibid., 394.

remaining moral in one's own and another's eyes, or the stress of resolving or not resolving the conflict. In addition, the minister would have to be a source of support to the one seeking help in order that real "coping" might occur. Although Haan has noted that a person must "defend" sometimes for the sake of maintaining self integration, coping would seem to be the preferred mode in which moral action and development -- and discernment -- takes place. If, for example, as we have related above, specific coping processes are associated with positive moral action -- intellectuality, empathy and suppression, and specific defending processes are associated with negative moral action -- intellectualizing, isolation and displacement, then the pastoral minister will want strategically to promote conditions for the former and impede conditions for the latter.

Finally, the conclusion from the experiments regarding led and dominated groups is pertinent. According to the interactional proposal, "higher moral action scores"⁷² resulted from groups which were led by a member of the group with natural leadership skills, as opposed to those groups which were dominated by a member who violated the rules of interactional morality "whereby all may speak, none should dominate, and anyone may veto."⁷³ These findings for a group process may nonetheless help to suggest an ideal

⁷² Ibid., 344.

⁷³ Ibid., 112.

role for a pastoral minister who would assist in moral discernment. Although the person seeking assistance may, for example, wish to completely yield to the judgment of the minister in a moral matter, the person's moral action and development would seem better served by ministers' leadership and not domination of the discernment process. For example, "leadership" would entail a solicitation and articulation of positions in a pastoral dialogue, while "domination" might be exhibited in an authoritarian teaching or editing of what is important in the consideration at hand.

As a psychological theory of morality, the interactional proposal of Haan and her associates is of primary interest to my thesis regarding pastoral moral discernment in the Roman Catholic tradition. I stated in Chapter One that given the warrants we have established, the contributions of psychology to Catholic moral reflection, though relatively unemployed in the past, are welcome ones indeed. The specific contributions of the interactional proposal are now emerging, including the importance of dialogue and situational equalization in moral reflection; the significance of emotion, stress and ego processes in moral action and development; and the dynamic of moral reflection itself as a determinant of growth. We will

return later to a more detailed discussion of their implications.

What Haan and her associates judge to be the "thin assumptions of value" of the interactional theory are indeed akin to the normative grounds of others who are more at home making "thick" assumptions of value in their theories of morality. Both moral philosopher John Macmurray and theologian James Gustafson share an interactional base of morality with Haan, even though each is religious in his orientation to morality. With a view toward ratifying, criticizing and complementing the interactional proposal as an important contribution of psychology to Catholic moral reflection, I will now present Macmurray's and Gustafson's theories of Christian morality as amicable conversation partners with Haan's theory. Although Haan's theory will remain the cornerstone of my thesis, my hope is that the conversation will yield a comprehensive theory of interactional morality which will serve as a base for a model of pastoral moral reflection, a model which will address a current lacuna in the Roman Catholic tradition.

CHAPTER 3

MORAL AGENCY IN RELATION: JOHN MACMURRAY'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY

In responding to the parameters of the discipline of experimental psychology, Haan and her associates lay claim only to "thin" assumptions of value in their interactional proposal for morality. The moral grounds of dialogue, equalization and participation, are elements of a "true" theory, characteristic of the empirical sciences, rather than a "best" theory, that which philosophers and theologians seek to argue and demonstrate. The project of the experimental psychologist is to state and test broad assumptions of value which recruit wide agreement, while the philosopher and theologian traditionally have proposed specific values and principles by which a person should live.

As we have seen in Chapter Two, "thick" and "thin" assumptions overlap. The normative discussions of philosophers emerge from postulations which are grounded in common experience. At least in their beginning forms, claims of "best" theories rest on assertions about the way things "really are," the way we experience them in our daily lives. Otherwise, we would not pay attention to them as worthy of our moral allegiance. Likewise, hypotheses of

science rest on normative foundations about the way things should be according to a particular hierarchy of values. These norms must be acknowledged as certain restrictions on the field of scientific consideration, lest the empirical theories claim too much.

We do well, it would seem, to combine consciously the normative and the empirical as two approaches to the moral life. Indeed, the premise of my thesis is that the Catholic tradition, particularly in its pastoral expression, could profit from a relationship with social science in its own articulation of morality. As the best of the natural law contribution to Catholic moral thought has taught us, we can rightly attend to the way we are in order to determine the way we should live. A description of "the way we are" is adequate to the extent that it represents humanity, in its acting, striving and suffering, and the more comprehensive the descriptive theory the better.

To that end, having presented and evaluated Haan's interactional theory of morality as the centerpiece for my thesis, I hope to fortify and extend the effect of this empirical purchase on the moral life by presenting to Haan and her associates two dialogue partners, John Macmurray from philosophy and James Gustafson from Christian theology. I initiate the dialogue not merely for the sake of introducing traditionally acceptable sources for Christian moral reflection, but with the intention of eventually yielding a truly comprehensive foundational ethic from which

a method for Catholic pastoral moral reflection might be derived. All of the partners in the forthcoming conversation in Chapter Five share an interactional base for morality. Haan, Macmurray and Gustafson view the moral life as relational, dynamic and multi-dimensional. I believe there are important critical junctures among the three theories, and it is hoped that the particular nuances which Macmurray and Gustafson bring to Haan in the conversation will orient, criticize and complement her central insights.

In this chapter, I will outline and critique the moral philosophy of John Macmurray. Implicit in the presentation are the three questions to which we have subjected a number of theories of morality: "What is morality and how does it emerge in the person?" "What are the philosophical or anthropological underpinnings of the proposal?" and "What are the advantages and disadvantages of the theory?" Lastly, as with the presentation on Haan's interactional proposal, I will conclude the chapter with a brief discussion of the specific implications of Macmurray's theories of moral agency for an ethical foundation and critical method for Catholic pastoral moral discernment.

I. Macmurray's Relational Morality

John Macmurray's fundamental conviction is that the enterprise of natural theology, determining a path to God through common human experience, is not misguided. Although it seems awkward to pose this negatively, Macmurray was

nearly alone among his contemporaries in defending that conviction. The bulk of Macmurray's thought was published between 1930 and 1965, a period in which modern philosophy was characterized by a marked propensity toward atheistic conclusions. To both of the predominant atheistic forms of philosophy during that time, existentialism and linguistic analysis, Macmurray has a bold answer:

I shall content myself, at this stage, with expressing my belief that the more closely modern philosophy keeps to its programme, and the more purely objective its procedure becomes, the more inevitable is the atheism of its conclusion...Yet I cannot accept the conclusion, in spite of its logical necessity...[T]hat religion rests upon some special and extraordinary type of experience apart from which it could not arise -- this seems to me hardly credible...Religion is the original, and the one universal expression of our human capacity to reflect; as primitive and as general as speech. It is atheists and¹ agnostics who have been exceptional and abnormal.

Indeed, as Macmurray perceives it, philosophers of his time met the urgency of a radical "loss of faith"² with a remarkable lack of nerve and a studied ignorance. Of analytical and existential philosophers, he remarks:

. . . whereas the logical empiricists discard the problems in order to maintain the method, the existentialists relinquish the method in wrestling with the problems.³

¹ John Macmurray, The Self as Agent (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1957), 19-20.

² Macmurray, Freedom in the Modern World (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1932), 24.

³ Macmurray, The Self as Agent, 27.

According to Macmurray, contemporary philosophy, having settled for theoretical and egocentric method and content,⁴ is bankrupt in the face of the loss of faith and the diminishment of the role of religion. With no resources to recover either faith or religion, philosophy has become irrelevant to one of the foundational struggles of the human condition. As such, it has minimized the personal aspects of life; what remains is what Macmurray terms a "crisis of the personal," and the challenge is to formulate a philosophy which recognizes the whole person, articulated as the "form of the personal."⁵

A portrayal of the human condition in its wholeness his primary concern, Macmurray challenges the presumption of the "cogito," or the Cartesian "I think," position in modern philosophy. This, he argues, is what has made modern philosophy theoretical and egocentric. Instead, he proposes the "I do" position of personal action as that into which the "I think" is subsumed and therefore the starting point for philosophy:

The 'I think' is not ultimate; it is the negative mode of the activity of the Self, and presupposes the 'I do'... The Self, then, is not the thinker but the doer. In its positive doing₆ it is agent; in its negative doing it is subject.

This, as we shall see, is the center of Macmurray's thought: To give a full account of the human person is to consider

⁴ Ibid., 38.

⁵ Ibid., 29.

⁶ Ibid., 89-90.

him or her not just as observer but participant, not merely as the subject looking out on the world's happenings, but the agent of actions in the world, and perhaps most importantly, the agent who acts in conjunction with other persons. Knowledge of the world is not accrued in order to know of or know about, but to know in the way that one knows a close friend. As such, human action, the core of distinctive human identity, is charged with emotion. For Macmurray, "All meaningful knowledge is for the sake of action, and all meaningful action for the sake of friendship."⁷

We will return to the role of action in relation to thought in Macmurray's scheme when we consider the construction of his moral anthropology. For now, it is essential to acknowledge this as a theoretical point of departure for Macmurray and as a clear reference for divergence from his contemporaries. Macmurray's convictions stand as antithetical to the tenets of traditional critical philosophy. In place of Critical philosophy's person-as-subject, he would propose the person-as-agent; in place of the solitary original position of "I think", he would propose the more relational "I do" (with you). In short, Macmurray's position is more practical, action-oriented, admissive of emotion, and relational than the positions of his contemporaries.

⁷ Ibid., 15.

Even prior to our further explication of Macmurray's thought, we can note where these convictions lead. His exceptions with modern philosophy readily emerge.

First, as we have noted, in Critical philosophy the standpoint is egocentric and theoretical. The embrace of the Cartesian "I think" position entails a suspicion of the outside world as the locus of real meaning for the person. Consequently, with such exaggerated stress on subjective reality, both the relational and the practical are downplayed. Moreover, to contain effectively the information of the outside realm, it is ascribed to the world of "matter" and is considered relative to the world of the "mind." This is the dichotomous manner in which modern philosophy describes the cycle of action and reflection. But if the person is agent and not merely subject, actor and not merely acted upon, then the dichotomy between mind and matter as a means of describing action and reflection, although convenient, is artificial. Macmurray summarizes the logical consequence of such a scheme:

There would be a practical or bodily self which acts without thinking, and a theoretical, spiritual or mental self, which thinks without acting. This is the genesis of the mind-body problem, which is in fact no problem but a patent absurdity.⁸

Action and reflection for an agent may be conceived in a more integrative fashion, as Macmurray shows:

⁸ Ibid., 79.

It is not a distinction between material and mental entities or processes. In reflection, where the Self is subject and everything else, including its own past, is object, this distinction between material and non-material aspects can be made by selective attention. In action, however, the distinction is matter of intention; and the ground of distinction is the difference⁹ between a theoretical and a practical intention.

Second, and a direct result of such a basic critique, Macmurray challenges Kant, the central figure of Critical philosophy. Addressing Kant's primacy of the "I think" standpoint, as well as Kant's own distinctions between the theoretical and the practical which flow from that standpoint, Macmurray demonstrates the incoherence and the inadequacy of the theory as a whole: Kant begins with the familiar "I think" dichotomy of mind and matter, stating that we construct the world we know. Also, there is a presupposition of a world-of-things which does exist in itself but which we cannot really know. That is, the aesthetic can only be appreciated individually and subjectively. So we must rely on practical reason to develop a law which will tell us what a generalizable good is. But, as Macmurray shows, this reveals an internal contradiction. The conclusion, that only practical reason can tell us the good, contradicts the premise, which states the primacy of the theoretical.¹⁰

⁹ Ibid., 178.

¹⁰ Ibid., 66.

Even more fundamentally, though, Macmurray challenges the adequacy of Kant. By commencing with the primacy of the theoretical and subjective, Kant has, according to Macmurray, excluded the possibility of religion as a source of human morality. Because the "I think" position precludes the "I and thou" relational activity of the human person and God, religion, a basic human reality for Macmurray, is consequently discounted or eliminated. This is also indicative for Macmurray that, even prescinding from the issue of belief in God, Kant would generally preclude the possibility of deriving morality from our knowledge of each other.¹¹

While the role and importance of the intellect as the true seat of knowledge is exalted in Critical philosophy, Macmurray stresses the importance of emotion as a generator of intentional action. With the admission of relationality and agency as bases in moral philosophy, the role of emotion in the life of the human person changes. We will examine this later as part of Macmurray's construction of a moral anthropology. Macmurray specifically criticizes the division in Critical philosophy between "judgments of facts" and "value judgments." Presupposing, as his contemporaries do, that judgments of facts are based upon a cold, rational assessment of objective pieces of information arranged in well-ordered logic and therefore constituting real

¹¹ Ibid., 73.

knowledge, and that value judgments are "merely" emotional preferences, Macmurray objects:

Might I not as well say that an assertion of fact is "merely" an expression of a thought that occurred in me?...If our thoughts are objective because they refer to objects, then our feelings, which refer to objects in their own fashion, are objective also. If our thoughts are verified in action, so are our valuations. Is it not the case that our judgment that some experience which we seek will satisfy us is often falsified by the event?¹²

A final general conviction worthy of our attention is Macmurray's conception of personal development. Traditional Aristotelian philosophy holds that the distinguishing characteristic of the human person, rationality, develops "organically," i.e., that the child acquires rationality over time through habits. The child, as with any other organism, adapts to its environment and in the process progresses from potential to actual rationality.¹³ But Macmurray argues that even if one concedes that nature fits a newborn with what it needs for survival, still a baby is not an organic, potential, unfolding anything, because it is totally helpless. Or, more accurately, a baby's "adaptation to its environment" is to express a need for another's care, comfort and attention, a need to be in relation:¹⁴

He can live only through other people and in dynamic relation with them. In virtue of this fact he is a person, for the personal is

¹² Ibid., 202.

¹³ John Macmurray, Persons in Relation (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), 44.

¹⁴ Ibid., 48-50.

constituted by the relation of persons. His rationality is already present, though only germinally, in the fact that he lives and can only live by communication. His essential natural endowment is the impulse to communicate with another human being.¹⁵

Macmurray thus meets Aristotle head on with the words "natural endowment." Macmurray seeks to describe the "natural" human condition but cautions against Aristotle's concentration on individual species and their analogies with animals. For Macmurray, there is danger in organic analogues. The human person is distinguished from the animal in its natural movement toward relationality, and the "form of the personal," the basis of moral philosophy, must be guided by that assertion.

Having thus situated Macmurray's thought as a critical response to the theoretical presuppositions of his time, we now turn to his constructive contributions to moral philosophy. These will include his important epistemological scheme, his moral anthropology, and his proposed basis for morality. Prior to those discussions, a brief consideration of Macmurray's method is in order.

A Methodological Note

Early in his work, Self as Agent, John Macmurray describes the endeavor of that book and that of its companion work, Persons in Relation, as "exhibiting the unity of human experience as a whole, in all its general

¹⁵ Ibid., 51.

aspects..." As we have seen above, several of those aspects of human experience which Macmurray felt compelled to address previously had been polarized by his contemporaries: thought and action, mind and matter, fact and value, reason and emotion. Unifying such aspects of the human condition, indeed, making sense of them at all, is an eternal task for philosophy.

For Macmurray, aspects of human experience which may be schematized as opposites -- thought and action, for example -- ought not be viewed as necessarily irreconcilable or negational. There is little evidence for such dichotomous categories anywhere in Macmurray's work. Instead, Macmurray proposes that all of these seeming polar opposites are best conceived as positive and negative "modes" of phenomena of human life. This scheme is comprehensively applied to a host of human experiences, all of which have an obverse complement. (Much to the distraction of the reader, such modes seem to multiply on every page, and at any given time, Macmurray simultaneously entertains several modes which are "cross-listed" with each other!)

How does Macmurray explain this scheme? He is careful to point out that it is not a mathematical scheme, as numerically positive and negative values would cancel out each other and the ultimate effect on human living would be nil. Likewise, it is not an organic or developmental scheme encountered in, for example, the Hegelian notion of thesis followed chronologically by antithesis on the way to full

synthetic realization. It is a personal unity of a positive which contains its own negative. Although Macmurray's definition of this personal unity falls short of satisfactory, he does offer examples. As a reference to the possible simultaneous existence of contrary modes, he points to the co-existence of good and evil¹⁶ in a single action, but not merely a kind of "double-effect" proposition.

Another illustration is the capacity for self-deception by which a person can do the right thing for the wrong reasons.

As a particular example, he reformulates the traditional thought/action polarities as thought arising in action.¹⁷ If one starts with the primacy of the theoretical, there is no bridge between thought and action, no real possibility to "convert" thought to action. But Macmurray begins with the primacy of activity, with "activity" broadly conceived to include any intended practical change or modification of the "Other."¹⁸ As such, thought is one mode of that activity, a theoretical intention by which one seeks a modification of the representation of the Other. Action, distinguished from and contained in "activity," is the practical intention to modify not merely the representation of the Other, but the Other itself. Conceived in this way, action and thought are positive and negative modes of one entity, activity. By

¹⁶ Macmurray, The Self as Agent, 99.

¹⁷ Ibid., 90-104.

¹⁸ Ibid., 78.

this, the primacy of the practical is maintained,¹⁹ and the unity of human life is preserved under the "I do" rubric.

This is not simply a sleight of hand on Macmurray's part to alleviate the mind/matter dichotomy which plagues modern philosophy. The positive and negative modes constitute a methodological paradigm which Macmurray applies to numerous elements of his comprehensive philosophy of the "form of the personal." In addition to thought and action, he dissects engagement with the world into the positive and negative "withdrawal and return,"²⁰ motivations for action into positive "love" and negative "fear,"²¹ and the religious field of the personal into the positive "range" of community and the negative "intensity" of the community.²² They are respective descriptions of engagement, motivation and religion which manage to include the fullness of their complexity. Macmurray does not create artificial disjunctions merely for the sake of simplifying; he acknowledges the component parts of human life as constitutive phases of activity so that he may firmly establish the primacy of action.

¹⁹ Ibid., 79.

²⁰ Ibid., 181.

²¹ Macmurray, Persons in Relation, 67.

²² John Macmurray, The Structure of Religious Experience (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1971), 47.

II. Basic Constructive Elements of Macmurray's "Form of the Personal"

We have seen how the context in which Macmurray wrote had a critical bearing on his thought. Also, we have a glimpse of the method which we can expect to shape the contours of Macmurray's theories. We now turn to a synoptic view of the constructive content of his philosophy. After examining Macmurray's epistemological framework, we will explicate his moral anthropology and basis for morality. Obviously, a full treatment of Macmurray's thought is not possible, given the length and intent of this chapter.

An Epistemological Framework

Much of Macmurray's work is devoted to developing an adequate way of conceptualizing human interaction with the world. As noted above, this is not simply a matter of knowing the world as an observer, as a subject, but of knowing the world as a participant, an agent. As such, the "knowing" of which Macmurray writes is the knowledge which we have of friends -- multi-dimensional, emotionally intentional and ultimately, active. So when we speak of an epistemological framework which Macmurray outlines, we mean a framework for ways of "knowing" in this broad sense. Even when Macmurray writes of "modes of reflection" he has in mind this notion that knowing is ultimately an inseparable part of activity, the complement to action, so that,

Every reflective activity is therefore an activity of expression, which is completed only by an external embodiment...Every student knows from experience how much of illusion lurks in the belief that his problem has been completely

thought through and resolved before he has set anything out in writing. Quite apart from this, the incompleteness of the theoretical activity until it is externalized lies specially in this, that only so can it gain reality by becoming a deed, and take its place in history as an act. Publication is essential to the realization of reflection; and we do well to be sceptical of all 'mute, inglorious Miltons.'²³

Macmurray continuously explores and articulates religion as a way of knowing. More specifically, he is interested in a contemporary expression of the relationship between the intellect, the emotions and religion, as well as the relationship between science, art, history and religion. As with most of Macmurray's thought, these are connected discussions, and together they begin to offer us a perspective on his epistemology.

According to Macmurray, the reflective modes of action have two principal purposes in their determination of intentional action on the "Other," i.e., the world. They are responsible for apprehension and valuation of the Other. There are three modes of reflection for Macmurray -- science, art and religion. Along with the emotional and intellectual modes of reflective activity, Macmurray uses these three modes to define his epistemology.²⁴

In the intellectual mode of reflective activity, the agent apprehends reality as a discrimination of means to realizing some practical intention. This intellectual apprehension corresponds to the scientific mode of

²³ Macmurray, The Self as Agent, 187.

²⁴ See Ibid., 188-198.

reflection whereby the world is appropriated as a "World-as-Means." It is limited to a means-to-end quality of reflection.

In the emotional mode of reflective activity, the agent has the capacity to evaluate the ultimate ends of practical intentions. It is an appreciation of the Other for its own sake, and, as this form of contemplation, it corresponds to the artistic mode of reflection.

The intellectual and emotional modes of reflection find their unity in religion, which views the Other in community. Macmurray calls religion the "full form of reflective rationality," and the ultimate condition of action.²⁵ How does he arrive at this formulation? Basing his moral anthropology on the relational, rather than the organic newborn,²⁶ Macmurray contends that the fundamental task of religion is the establishment, widening, and deepening of the experience of relationship in human life, i.e., community.²⁷ But why is religion a unifying way of knowing?

Macmurray returns to his conviction that the person is an agent of action. Further, if we come to see all of human history in this light, as the intentional action of a single

²⁵ Macmurray, Persons in Relation, 185.

²⁶ See the section below on "Moral Anthropology" for an explanation of the universality of the human need for relationship and its forms. The "community" to which we refer here is Macmurray's community of "heterocentric" persons who are motivated by love of another, not those who are motivated by fear.

²⁷ Ibid., 159.

"Agent," we can come to a belief in God which is extrapolated from human history rather than wrought from a "proof" for the existence of God. That is, we come to see the whole of human life not as a series of "events" or "happenings" to which we are passively subjected, but as the intentional acts of a personal Agent. This vision of the world as personal and communal, of course, requires a certain leap of faith. But this is how human history can lead us to a belief in God and an appreciation for religion as the fundamental way of thinking relationally about the world.²⁸

According to Macmurray, we can take another tack to arrive at the appreciation of religion as the wholeness of knowing. In the course of our living and relating to others, we come to know that we are not only apprehending and evaluating the world, we are also being apprehended and evaluated by others. We are both subject and object, or, as Macmurray would have it, we are "part of the field of common experience."²⁹ Moreover, this is not only a description of what goes on between us; we also might imagine that it is a description of ourselves before God: "dependent creatures in the world."³⁰ This, Macmurray contends, is the relational experience of the world upon which religion rests as a way of knowing:

²⁸ Macmurray, The Self as Agent, 221-222.

²⁹ Macmurray, The Structure of Religious Experience, 17.

³⁰ Ibid.

The focus of all human experience is to be found in our relations to one another. We are parts of one personal world, which is simply the natural world penetrated and transformed by personal purposes...Religion is simply the recognition of this fact and of its importance, and true religion is its acceptance with all its implications.³¹

As the primary epistemological referent, religion subsumes the other ways of knowing, the intellectual apprehension of the scientific mode of reflection, and the emotional valuation of the artistic mode of reflection. While the basic "personal field" of religion is expressed as "I and You," scientific knowing, as an instrumental mode of reflection on instrumental means, is expressed as "I and the world," and artistic knowing, as a mode devoted to contemplation of the ends of human life and sharing those inherent goods with others, is expressed as "I and I and the world."³² For Macmurray, only the genuinely mutually interdependent relationship, not the instrumental or the organically purposeful relationship, can offer a truly constituted human being and knowing. Conversation of friends is the paradigm for the field of the personal, and the generalized expression of that is religion. Science, interested in an object, neglects both the first and second person, expressing neither an "I" nor a "you." Art, in only

³¹ Ibid., 72-73.

³² John Macmurray, Reason and Emotion 2nd ed. (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1961), 222-223.

giving and not receiving the impressions of the good, merely generalizes the second person.³³

According to Macmurray, the demand for communion, from the earliest moment of human existence, is absolute and goes on until it is perfectly met, both in breadth and in depth. Responding to this, he explains the place which Jesus has established in history:

He was the religious genius who realized the meaning of community achieved through their history of his own people -- the Hebrew race; and in realizing it he made available the universal meaning of religion for all time and all people.³⁴

Finally, then, Macmurray would claim that religion, in its embrace of "the personal," is "not an aspect of life which can be contrasted with other aspects; it is the integration of all aspects in one whole."³⁵

Moral Anthropology

With this preliminary information, we can begin to form a portrait of the moral person according to Macmurray. Of particular interest to us are a review of Macmurray's important notion of "self," which will reveal to us his basic insights about the individual person, including the relationship between action and thought in agency; moral motivation; and the roles of reason and emotion in moral agency.

³³ Ibid., 148-154.

³⁴ Ibid., 238.

³⁵ Ibid., 249.

As we have suggested above, Macmurray's thought cannot be isolated from the context in which he lived. Modern philosophy, with its own particular historical leanings, prompted Macmurray to examine the solitary "I think" position as the starting point for moral philosophy.

More specifically, he sought to address the particular formulations of the self which emerged from the "I think" position. Macmurray poses the history of such formulations: From Descartes to Hume, the Self is conceived as a substance, a material which is mathematically measurable and able to be manipulated, and which follows the rules of a material order of life. From Kant on, the self is an organic entity, developing and evolving according to the rules of the biological sciences. Each of these rather sizable periods of history has witnessed its own advances and frustrations in capturing an adequate description of the self. To limit one's consideration to material or biological rules of order and prediction seemed to Macmurray particularly narrow. He set to challenge those conceptions by developing his own more unified view of the Self, not as substance or organism, but as person.³⁶

The foundation upon which all of this unified view of the person is built is Macmurray's account of the earliest experiences of human life, best summarized in the essay, "Mother and Child," in Persons in Relation. We have briefly alluded to it above, but because of its centrality to his

³⁶ Macmurray, The Self as Agent, 34-37.

thesis, it deserves more treatment here. According to Macmurray, the mother attends to the every need of the totally helpless newborn, the child educating the action which it wants from the mother by expressing those needs. Simply unable to constantly meet such needs all the time, the mother inevitably withdraws the attention and care, and the child is left to his³⁷ own resources, fearful and egocentric. Two paths emerge for the needy child in this fearful and egocentric position: Aggressively arranging for the care he needs, making the mother afraid of the consequences of not attending to the child, or withdrawing into total passivity to please the mother, thus "winning approval" and the care he desires. Thus, fighting or fleeing become the alternatives to the child locked in fear and egocentricity. To the child who recovers from the trauma of having been "abandoned," real love becomes possible when he realizes that he can love and be loved by the mother only by establishing a certain interdependence with her, meeting his own needs, not through manipulation or passivity, but along with her.³⁸ From Macmurray's own construction of this early experience, he begins to draw the

³⁷ In this section and in sections below, I refer to Macmurray's own scheme, which is posed in terms of a "mother" as the primary caregiver and a male child. This explains my use of female pronouns to refer to the caregiver and male pronouns to refer to the child.

³⁸ See Macmurray, Persons in Relation, 44-63. (We will further examine love and fear as the basic motivations for action in the following section.)

relational portrait of the self which characterizes all of his theory.

To complete this portrait of the self, we look to Macmurray's assertions regarding the relationship of thought and action in moral agency. Action is the key category for constituting the self in the relational manner suggested above. Macmurray likens the philosophical move from the material or organic conception of self to a relational one to the movement in psychology from subject to behavior:

First, so long as psychology is conceived as a science of mind, consciousness or the subjective, it fails. To establish itself it must think of itself as a science of human behavior. Similarly in the philosophical transition, we can no longer conceive the Self as the subject in experience, and so as the knower. The Self must be conceived, not theoretically as subject, but practically as agent. Secondly, human behavior is comprehensible only in terms of a dynamic social reference; the isolated, purely individual self is a fiction.³⁹

But why this primacy of action and behavior? What is the inadequacy of the "I think" position? Macmurray answers in his seminal presentation of the "The Field of the Personal":

If we start with the solitary individual, self-isolated in reflection, and consider him existing as a thinker, we do exclude the normal sources of error, and his existence becomes an ideal existence...So we all rise above the sources of error, which lie in the limitation of a spatio-temporal existence and the practical necessities it imposes; above bias and prejudice; above the particularities of circumstance and experience which account for our differences from one another. So we all enter a logical heaven, where there is nothing to sully the pure exercise⁴⁰ of reason, and to think is to think the truth.

³⁹ Macmurray, The Self as Agent, 38.

⁴⁰ Macmurray, Persons in Relation, 22.

Obviously, Macmurray does not propose mere action as the distinctive core of the human person. Thought, reflection and knowledge are a complement to such action, or, according to the scheme above, the negative mode of the positive mode of action. Specifically, they are modes of rational activity; so thought falls within action. While action is primary and concrete, thought is secondary, abstract and derivative, but both are activity.⁴¹ Further, action does not accompany consciousness; consciousness is integrated in my bodily movement of activity, thus making it real human action.⁴² We cannot represent cognition as the cause of action, a subjective event causing an objective event, or we lapse into the mind/matter dichotomy which Macmurray sought to avoid.⁴³ Macmurray poses it another way: Action may be conceived as "kinetic" activity, while thought, reflection and knowledge are "potential" activities.⁴⁴

If thought is subsumed in action, what might be its function? Thought and reflection maintain the intentional quality of action, keeping activity from being a "blind activity."⁴⁵ They are key elements in establishing action as the distinctive quality of human morality. Thought has

⁴¹ Macmurray, The Self as Agent, 89.

⁴² Ibid., 118.

⁴³ Ibid., 128.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 130.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 129.

two functions in this regard. It discriminates a set of possibilities for action and it selects one of the possibilities as the one to be realized as action.⁴⁶

Reflection can occur "on its own," but only when it attends to the past and not the future, thereby withdrawing from intention. Action, then, technically conceived as thought-charged activity, is choice. By virtue of the relationality which Macmurray defines in "Mother and Child," it is choice not simply in relation to an object, i.e., the creation of a solitary subject, but choice in relation to an Other, a person who, in the "I and You," constitutes myself as a moral person.

By way of review, then, we can see what constitutes for Macmurray a theory of moral motivation. First, one can mark the distinction between "intention" and "motive:"

Motive is the continuant element in action; it determines the general direction of an agent's behavior, while the particular actions he performs are determined by the particular intentions he forms from moment in terms of his discrimination⁴⁷ and valuation of his situation as he knows it.

Motivation is the ongoing disposition of the moral agent. It is a disposition borne out in particular actions which are prompted by specific intentions. Motivation may be conceived as the stance from which numerous intentions arise.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 189.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 198.

For Macmurray, moral motivation is directly connected to the resolution (or lack of resolution) in the moral agent of the mother and child relation described in detail above. For the child who resolves the withdrawal of care as a necessary cue for his own interdependence with the mother, genuine love becomes the "positive" motive in his action with others. That is, he extrapolates on the relationship with the primary caregiver and makes the desire for interdependence the guiding cause for human action and interaction with others.

The child who does not resolve the withdrawal of care in such a "positive" fashion, thrown back upon his own resources and full of egocentricity, develops fear as the motive for action and interaction with others. As we have noted, that basic fear may be translated into actions which attempt to elicit the care which has been withdrawn. Those actions, "negatively" motivated, are generally characterized as either fleeing or fighting. Through the fleeing actions, the agent submissively seeks to placate the mother so that approval may be substituted for the care which is missing. Through the fighting actions, the agent aggressively imposes his will upon the mother, thus frightening her into providing a pseudo-attention which substitutes for the care which has been withdrawn.⁴⁸ This negative disposition is one of defense; Macmurray states that it cannot include mutuality:

⁴⁸ See Macmurray, Persons in Relation, 99-104.

Such action is implicitly a refusal of mutuality, and an effort to constrain the other to do what we want. By conforming submissively to his wishes we put him under an obligation to care for us. By aggressive behavior we seek to make him afraid not to care for us. In both cases, we are cheating; and in both cases the Other is compelled to defend himself against our deception. Self-interested relation⁴⁹ excludes the mutuality it seeks to extort.

It is clear that in this particular case, Macmurray employs the designations "positive" and "negative" to mean more than opposite polar extremes. They serve as valuations of the motivations he describes. While the positive motivation is other-centered and rooted in love and self-donation, the negative motivation is egocentric and rooted in fear and self-preservation. But they are not of neutral value to Macmurray:

Now there are two, and I think only two, emotional attitudes through which human life can be radically determined. They are love and fear. Love is the principle of life, while fear is the death-principle in us. I mean that literally; and would go on to explain it by saying that you can divide men and women most fundamentally into two classes, those who are fear-determined and those who are love-determined. The former are not merely dead souls; they stand for death against life...They are the people of whom Jesus said that they need to be reborn. Whereas the love-determined people have life in them...[t]hey are the people who are really alive, of whom it can be said that they possess eternal life...⁵⁰

As we shall see, the motives of love and fear become important in Macmurray's conception of morality, based as it is upon human freedom. Insofar as fear is the "great

⁴⁹ Ibid., 105.

⁵⁰ Macmurray, Freedom in the Modern World, 58.

inhibitor of free action,"⁵¹ it must be overcome by the positive motivation, love. This is where religion enters the picture of moral motivation. For Macmurray,

All religion...is grappling with fear...Real religion will save us from our fear but not the things we are afraid of. Therefore any religion, any form of Christianity which offers us protection from life, defense against the consequence of our ignorance and folly and escape from the natural demands of the conditions of our human existence is spurious.⁵²

As the domain of the "field of the personal" and the promoter of genuine mutuality and other-centered community, religion casts out defensiveness and its root condition, fear, and engenders freedom and moral action -- "life," as Macmurray would have it.

Implicit in this discussion of Macmurray's moral anthropology, which has included such terms as "relationality," "intention," "motive," "behavior," "discrimination," "valuation," "fear," and "love," is a detectable relationship between reason and emotion. Until now, we have said much about Macmurray's notion of thought, especially in relation to action, but we have avoided the term "reason." Macmurray was well aware of the issues surrounding the use of reason in the moral life, issues which pervaded the writings of his contemporaries. One such issue was the respective roles of reason and emotion in

⁵¹ John Macmurray, Conditions of Freedom (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1949), 27.

⁵² Macmurray, Freedom in the Modern World, 64.

human life. On that topic, Macmurray makes several important points.

First, in responding to the "solipsism of theoretical thinking," Macmurray holds that just as the term "person" must be expanded beyond the "I" position to the "I and You" position in order to account for both the person as subject and object, so "reason" must be expanded to reflect a human capacity which is both subjective and objective. That is, "reason" must be rescued from the "specialized reference to logical thought" which has contained it in the past. This is an explainable development which is traceable to particular efforts to make reason the differentiating characteristic of the human condition:

The empirical determination of the differentia is naturally derivative and variable in principle; and it has in fact varied considerably during the history of philosophy. If it has tended on the whole to have a predominantly theoretical reference, this is because Plato and Aristotle determined the tradition in this direction at the start by their conviction that the good life for man is the 'theoretical' life.⁵³

For Macmurray, reason is more than merely the human capacity to assess the outside world subjectively as an observer. Reason must account for the fact that as humans we are assessed by others and respond to those others. Declaring that the proper disjunction is not between reason and emotion but between intellect and emotion, Macmurray makes an appeal for "emotional reason," that is, a rational

⁵³ Macmurray, Persons in Relation, 27.

exercise of emotion.⁵⁴ Citing the points of our earlier discussion, he notes that all actions have motives or intentions which originate in the emotions, and although excess or sloppy emotions may lead to error, emotions

...may sharpen the focus of our attention, quicken our apprehension of the object upon which they are directed, and lead to the recognition of truths, and even of facts, which otherwise would have escaped our notice.⁵⁵

Specifically, by our emotions, or "emotional reason," we come to appreciate ourselves as the object of the other's attention, and thereby, we can appreciate ourselves in an objective manner. So beyond subjectivity, "reason is the capacity to behave, not in terms of our own nature, but in terms of our knowledge of the nature of the world outside."⁵⁶ This, as Macmurray points out, is a process of "disillusionment" in which the exercise of emotional reason allows us to act "not in terms of our subjective inclinations and private sympathies,"⁵⁷ as though our emotional life were central, but to "act in the light of eternity,"⁵⁸ as though we are "part of the development of humanity."⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Macmurray, Reason and Emotion, 5.

⁵⁵ Macmurray, Persons in Relation, 33.

⁵⁶ Macmurray, Reason and Emotion, 20.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 23.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 30.

This has everything to do with morality. Through the emotions and "emotional reason," Macmurray has arrived at an objective universalizability of sorts which may serve as the nascent foundation of morality:

Our individual tensions are simply the new thing growing through us into the life of mankind. When we can see them steadily in this universal setting, then and then only will our private difficulties become significant. We shall recognize them as the travail of a new birth for humanity; as the beginning of a new knowledge of ourselves and of God.⁶⁰

Second, as we noted above, emotions serve as the locus of valuation. Macmurray takes issue with the formulation of the problem of the modern person as a struggle between head and heart. Instead, he says, it is a problem of the heart:

Our dilemma lies in the fact that we cannot decide what would be the best to do because we cannot decide what is best worth having. That is a dilemma, not between the heart and the head, but in the heart. What is worthwhile cannot be decided by thinking, by intellect, by science, but only by emotion.⁶¹

That being the case, far from a control or repression of the emotional life, Macmurray calls for an increased awareness rooted in the development of "the life of the senses," by which we come to appreciate things in and of themselves and not merely as means to other things.⁶² There are pitfalls to such emotional "data" -- illusory feelings, feelings which we misrepresent, and insensitivity to feelings which

⁶⁰ Ibid., 18.

⁶¹ Macmurray, Freedom in the Modern World, 55.

⁶² Macmurray, Reason and Emotion, 39.

are called for -- but in opening ourselves to the life of the senses, we open ourselves to the artistic contemplation of things, which can lead us to "a real emotional knowledge of the significance of real things."⁶³

The Bases and Forms of Morality

Macmurray employs the moral anthropology which we have outlined above in his general formulations of morality. In his collected works, I discern at least two of these formulations -- a morality based upon human freedom, and a morality based upon the motivations of love and fear.

The first of these may be adequately described as a "natural" morality.⁶⁴ For Macmurray, everything has a nature, and when it truly expresses its nature in action, it is free. Examples of such freedom are the material freedom of the things in nature following the "laws of nature;" the organic freedom of the evolution of living things and adaptation to their environment, i.e., finding a place and serving the species and its furtherance; or human freedom, which is the freedom to apprehend and enjoy a world outside

⁶³ Ibid., 60.

⁶⁴ It is interesting to note that Macmurray has few good words for a natural law morality, but the morality which emerges from his writing is so clearly one which is akin to natural law, and, as I will point out later, amenable to a revisionist natural law. His reservation about natural law is that it does not sufficiently account for human freedom and is really only a way of describing the human condition and its continuants in a "laboratory setting." See pp. 154-158 in Self as Agent.

ourselves and live in communion with others who do the same.⁶⁵

We can only be in touch with our freedom if we have a genuine sense of who we are designed to be. This is why Macmurray is so insistent that we are real in our thinking and feeling. It is the exercise of "emotional reason" which proffers to the person this sense of reality. This reality is technically defined by Macmurray as that which is outside our own "subjective inclinations and private sympathies." The conflation of emotion and reason yields a context for viewing our own lives in relation to the greater whole of a "new birth for humanity." For Macmurray, then, real thinking occurs when we "live completely by our knowledge of what is not ourselves,"⁶⁶ and real feeling "grasps the value of what is not ourselves."⁶⁷

Moreover, in keeping with our communal human nature and in order to test our knowledge and valuation of that which is outside ourselves, we offer our sense of reality in a dialogue with others who share their sense of reality:

We shall want to know whether our account of the inner reality of life is not mistaken...We shall require to criticize it and test it, to compare it with others; because we can so easily think we have got hold of something real when it is merely counterfeit.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Macmurray, Freedom in the Modern World, 170-175.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 135.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 151.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 113.

Nature determines our freedom, and freedom can only be known through our grasp of life in its reality. According to Macmurray, humans will only have access to reality by employing emotional reason and by subjecting our sense of reality to a dialogue with others, who may correct, criticize, affirm or complement our sense of reality.

Why is freedom so important for Macmurray? Freedom gives rise to morality:

To be a good human being is to realize true human nature in oneself; that is to say, to be really human in one's way of living. But that is the same thing as being free. Anything is free when it realizes its own proper nature spontaneously in its behavior. It follows that for us to be free and to be moral mean the same thing in the long run.⁶⁹

But human morality must be borne out of human freedom and not another type of freedom. Indeed, Macmurray can conceive of other types of morality which correspond to the other types of freedom mentioned above, but each has a flaw in prescribing human morality. A mechanical morality based on the freedom of things to respond to the laws of physical nature would be inadequate for human morality because it would see human behavior in terms of matter to be governed.⁷⁰ As such it could not account for the fully human life. An organic morality corresponding to the organizational development of living things such as the social organization of animals would reduce human behavior

⁶⁹ Ibid., 186.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 188.

and its governing morality to the analogy of a machine running smoothly, with human beings as mere cogs in that machine. Even if one were to derive a value of service to the species from this morality, Macmurray says it would not suffice as a human morality, because it is logically inconsistent for everyone to serve; someone must be served.⁷¹ Reciprocity and interaction is integral to human morality.

A truly human morality corresponds to the fullness of human freedom, which is, as we have noted, the capacity to "think and feel about the reality of the world outside," or to be freely ourselves for other people. In this sense, morality is a self-realization in terms of another human being, which is on the order of friendship:

Self-realization is the true moral ideal. But to realize ourselves we have to be ourselves, to make ourselves real. That means thinking and feeling really, for ourselves, and expressing our own reality in word and action. And this is freedom, and the secret of it lies in our capacity for friendship.⁷²

The second formulation of morality refers to the moral anthropology cited above, but is much less systematic (and complex) than the first. Referring to the motivations of love and fear which arise in relation to the withdrawal of the care of the mother (see above), Macmurray notes three "categories of apperception" which give birth to three moralities. The "successfully" resolved trauma of maternal

⁷¹ Ibid., 200.

⁷² Ibid., 219.

separation, as we have seen, results in a personal orientation of mutuality and heterocentricity grounded in love. This is the positive mode of apperception. The "unsuccessfully" resolved trauma of maternal separation results in one of two personal orientations of egocentricity, which we have termed fleeing or fighting. These are the negative modes of apperception.⁷³

The positive mode of apperception is communal apperception. The negative modes of apperception are contemplative, corresponding to the fleeing response, and the pragmatic, corresponding to the fighting response. Each in turn describes a morality. Communal morality is centered on the Other, and by it, love overcomes fear. The love of enemies prescribed by Christian morality would be an example of such a morality. Contemplative morality is egocentric. In its retreat to the self, it relies on ideals, good form, intuition and reflection. A Platonic fittingness would be an example. Pragmatic morality is also egocentric, and by it, the individual competes for power with other individuals and must limit his or her own freedom for the sake of the community only through a reasonable repression of that competition for power through obligation or duty. Examples of the pragmatic morality would be the Stoics, Roman law or Kant.⁷⁴

⁷³ Macmurray, Persons in Relation, 110.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 122-126.

All of this seems faintly reminiscent of Macmurray's three modes of reflection, religion, art and science, and the conceptual leap is not far: Religion, concerned as it is with the communal, could correspond to the first category of apperception. Art, the contemplation of things for their own sake, could correspond to the second. Science, a reflection on the means to achieve ends, corresponds to the pragmatic apperception. Macmurray never makes such a connection (indeed, it is unusual that he does not), but he does allude to three traditions of inherited morality: the Hebrew, based upon religion; the Greek, based upon art; and the Roman based upon the efficient organization of social life.⁷⁵

What about social morality in Macmurray's thought? By virtue of his main concentration -- establishing a "field of the personal" -- one would anticipate sparse references. Indeed, with friendship as the prototype of morality, Macmurray is principally concerned with "personal" morality. But two limited references are noteworthy. First, in his descriptions of the categories of apperception (moralities), Macmurray notes that the contemplative and pragmatic apperception have their counterparts in social ethics. Both of these are the "negative" modes, based upon fear, and as such, are only approximations of the "positive" mode of social life, which is genuine community. The counterpart for the contemplative apperception is the Rousseauvian view

⁷⁵ Macmurray, Freedom in the Modern World, 76.

of social life, based upon the sacrifice of self-will (fleeing) to an ideal of the common good.⁷⁶ The counterpart for the pragmatic apperception is the Hobbesian view that the State must mediate all claims to power (fighting).⁷⁷

Second, Macmurray makes the general observation that political obligations are derivative from the scheme for personal morality which he outlines. It is his contention that society, in an effort to imitate community as its form, enforces this through the method of the state -- law. But community as he has described it above is the ultimate aim of law, and state or law cannot be considered ends in themselves. For Macmurray, the definition of the state as a means is especially important to remember in the relations between nations.⁷⁸ Social justice, a matter of indirect rather than direct human relations, is a one-step remove from morality and therefore considered a subordinate "negative aspect" of morality:

Morality can only be defined through its positive aspect, yet it can only be realized through its own negative...justice safeguards the inclusiveness of the moral reference, and so the unity of the Other.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Macmurray, Persons in Relation, 141.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 136.

⁷⁸ Ibid., See pp. 190-204.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 188.

III. A Critical Review of Macmurray's Philosophy

In this section I will assess some of the strengths and weaknesses of John Macmurray's philosophical approach to relationality as a foundational ethic. Critiques offered by Macmurray's own philosophical community of contemporaries will serve as foils to my remarks.

The first overarching compliment owed to Macmurray is that he has made significant strides in accomplishing what he set out to do, especially in the works which followed his Gifford Lectures, The Self as Agent and Persons in Relation. Challenged by the atheistic, subjective and theoretical assumptions of his contemporaries in philosophy, Macmurray has attempted to develop a comprehensive philosophy which begins and ends in other theoretical places.

Macmurray has made an enormous contribution in his phenomenological approach to belief in God. Bypassing the opportunity to proffer another "proof" for God's existence, he instead frames the question of belief in terms of the plausibility of a personal universe. For Macmurray, the person must decide not if a theoretical construction is logically impeccable and thereby worthy of allegiance; he or she must extrapolate from experience whether there is a greater significance to personal relationships than one has acknowledged. The decision for or against belief is no less demanding, and Kirkegaard may well have the final say in capturing this existential leap of faith which Macmurray keeps in tact. But by the proposition of a personal

universe, the integrity of religious faith is maintained and deepened, and even in wrestling with this idea, we can begin to view Macmurray's horizon, i.e., the limits of strict rationality.

If we are to take seriously the claim that religious faith is about a relationship with God as the ultimate reality, then the terms upon which we approach the question should be relational and not solely logical ones. Macmurray helps the reader in considering the plausibility of faith, negatively posing the challenge: A truly religious person cannot deny a personal universe. But the "leap" is finally left to the reader. By positing a personal universe, Macmurray has successfully done two things. He has admitted the possibility of theistic conclusions, separate from traditional arguments, and he has successfully posited the field of religious experience as coterminous with everyday experience.

Macmurray has also presented a well articulated theory of the unity of the human condition. If the sins of his contemporaries are their separation of mind and matter, action and thought, subject and object, human and divine, natural and supernatural, reason and emotion, and body and soul, Macmurray makes important moves toward reparation. He directly addresses the two pitfalls of the predominant presuppositions of his contemporaries -- theoretical and egocentric views of the human person -- and gains ground for a practical and relational view by insisting on divergent

aspects of a single criterion: action in relation.

Blanshard is less sanguine about the project:

Once more, can we dispense with the causal interaction of mind and body if only we see that in action these are 'dimensions' of one whole? Is this really an advance in thought or language over saying that the tack causes the pain or that the resolution causes the letter to be written?⁸⁰

Macmurray's brilliant rebuttal of Kant shows well the limits of the theoretical approach to the human person and human morality. If one accepts Kant's notion of a noumenal world, then one cannot develop sound criteria for the arena of moral action, the phenomenal world, which cannot be known. The categorical imperative, then, hardly serves as the bulwark of human morality which it has pretended to be, as long as persons live in the phenomenal world of action and matter. Macmurray adeptly makes way for a moral anthropology and a morality which avoids the dichotomy inherent in Kant's theoretical person: "...a practical or bodily self which acts without thinking, and a theoretical self which thinks without acting."⁸¹ Or, as Blanshard has summarized the Kantian position which inspired Macmurray's thesis:

Macmurray agrees that the self as agent is the real self but contends that if we make so sharp a separation between the two selves and their work, we shall never get them together again; we shall

⁸⁰ Brand Blanshard, review of The Self as Agent by John Macmurray, In Philosophical Review 59 (1959): 548.

⁸¹ The Self as Agent, 79.

have the absurd situation in which Kant's ethics ended, in which a moral self that is "real" is at war with a self of sense and inclination, which is somehow a shadow of the first.⁸²

With Macmurray's embrace of practical action as the referent for anthropology and morality, one may rightfully raise the question, as D.D. Raphael does, if Macmurray's theory is not some form of Pragmatism, based on Macmurray's contention that "the satisfactoriness or unsatisfactoriness of [a] way of life is its verification." Raphael answers his own query:

There are, however, important differences...Just as the thinking subject of Cartesian philosophy is an abstraction from the practical agent, so the agent considered alone is an abstraction from the person, who is in community with other personal agents. Pragmatism, of course, allows for the fact that men live in societies, co-operating and competing with each other. But Professor Macmurray would say that the life of community, of love and friendship, is what makes men persons.⁸³

Closely allied to the theoretical standpoint in philosophy, and equally well refuted by Macmurray, is the egocentric standpoint. As we have seen, the bulk of Macmurray's work is devoted to the proposition that the idea of a "solitary agent is self-contradictory,"⁸⁴ and a form of solipsism -- "a reductio ad absurdum of the theoretical standpoint."⁸⁵ I see that Macmurray's fundamental insight

⁸² Blanshard, 545-546.

⁸³ D.D. Raphael, review of John Macmurray, The Self as Agent, In Philosophical Quarterly 9 (1959): 268.

⁸⁴ Macmurray, Persons in Relation, 24.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 16.

in this regard is that philosophy ought not presume the prideful position of subject in exploring the human condition. That we are being assessed even as we are assessing is sheer common sense, even if it is startling or offensive to philosopher kings. Macmurray has required that we treat this insight as more than a mere ancillary truth, that it is such a fact of human existence that we can call it "natural," and that it can even serve as a foundation for morality. D.D. Raphael thinks that Macmurray overstates the case when he demands that by adopting the position of subject, the person judges himself or herself to be outside the world as we know it, and therefore is non-existent:

This seems clearly fallacious. It follows that the Self as subject cannot know of its own existence, but it does not follow that the Self as subject does not exist. The subject 'is not part of the world that it knows'. Does it follow that the subject is not 'part of the world' (i.e., of everything that there is)? Only if it can be shown that 'the world' includes no more than 'the world that the subject knows.'⁸⁶

There are always some restrictions in building a case for anthropology on the earliest moments in human life, because one simply cannot know the intellect and emotions of a newborn. But Macmurray's description of the child as naturally relational goes a good distance in establishing the "I and You" position as much more plausible than Aristotle's idea of the organic self, or any other similar theory. It seems that "helpless" means just that -- "without the help of others," rather than "waiting for

⁸⁶ Raphael, 274.

innate self-sufficiency to develop in ourselves." Macmurray has captured this sense of the natural need for others in describing our first efforts to "be" in the world. As such, this is an effective means to approach the question of human identity and morality.

Another obvious strength is Macmurray's inclusion of the role of the emotions in fully determining a moral anthropology. His notion of "emotional reason," for example, is a helpful antidote to the power and position of overly rational philosophical approaches. But for all of his apparent validation of the emotions as a locus of human rationality, some lack of clarity remains. Macmurray argues for the role of the senses and emotions in providing knowledge of the ends of things and thus the locus for valuation, but in introducing religion as the key category in human knowing, he discounts the emotions as fragmentary sources of information. While the perspective of religious knowing is clearly the more comprehensive as Macmurray articulates it, the interplay between religion and emotion as centers of valuation is not clear. Emotion, it would seem, would have everything to do with personal relationship and would overlap in a necessarily messy way with the domain of religion. But Macmurray sees science and the intellect as the field of means, art and emotion as the field of ends, and religion as the field of the personal. The reader is left to guess which really is the criteria for valuation.

Prescinding from, or perhaps in ignorance of this confusion, Macmurray nonetheless makes two compelling points about the role of emotions in debates with his contemporaries. These points effectively build his case for a perspective on the human person beyond the strictly rational. First, he is able to debunk the association of truth with science by pointing to the preference for scientific truth as an emotional preference for a certain type of truth. Having lent credibility to the emotions as an arbiter of truth, he goes on to demonstrate that truth itself is supplied by emotional and religious empiricism.⁸⁷ Finally, he drives a wedge in the crack he has opened in the monolith of Critical philosophy: Taking on the supposed superiority of "judgments of fact" over "judgments of value," he notes that emotions and emotional preferences which occur to a person, which are often proven true or false by experience, are by that criterion as reliable or unreliable as thoughts which occur to a person and are validated or corrected in the same fashion. So much for mere "value judgments," the watchwords of the Logical Empiricists.

Macmurray's scheme of love and fear as the principal motivators in the human and moral life is echoed in other places. It is encountered in any number of theories of morality, from Erikson's central resolution of trust to philosophical and theological distinctions between guilt and

⁸⁷ Macmurray, The Structure of Religious Experience, x.

shame to Kohlberg's earliest stage. What is distinctive (although Erikson hints at this) is the possible role of religion as conceived by Macmurray in countering fear with love. According to him, religion, conceived as community, is able to provide a sense of well-being, trust and love such that a personal "recovery" of a stance of interdependence is possible. Religion, according to Macmurray, does not get its moral persuasiveness from the teachings and rules it promulgates, but from the communal living it promotes.

This, it seems to me, a believer, is the self-validating fulcrum of the entire theory: Community covers a multitude of sins. But it is unfortunate that Macmurray does not outline the features of this religious community in any way. For a philosopher of the practical persuasion, this is a glaring omission. By not characterizing that community, Macmurray leaves himself open to the criticism which Errol Harris willingly supplies:

[I]n any wide society involving large numbers of persons such direct positive relationship, with the best will in the world, proves to be impossible. Indirect, negative relations are inevitable in such a society, which always contains elements of community...but can never, as a whole, be a community...Macmurray, however, places the reality in the positive personal relation, without which personality cannot be realized. Yet he criticizes adversely those philosophers who find the reality in what is admittedly merely an ideal and who reduce the

actual to the status of appearance. He disapproves likewise of 'otherworldliness' in religion. It is not clear how his doctrine avoids these defects.⁸⁸

The heterocentric and practical moral anthropology which Macmurray proposes sheds valuable light on two traditional moral categories. First, Macmurray contends that "real" thinking and "real" feelings are achieved by testing our thoughts and feelings in dialogue with others. This open challenge to the egocentric position is a seemingly simple but actually profound antidote to one of the ongoing nemeses of the moral life, self-deception. Although Macmurray does not express his thesis in response to self-deception, I see important implications of it in this regard. For example, using this insight, one can make a strong case for an individual's moral discernment only being complete with scrutiny and guidance by trusted others. Otherwise, the danger of lapsing into the "I think" position is much greater.

Second, Macmurray's depiction of moral anthropology in terms of personal, rather than mechanical or organic terms, has implications for a revision of natural law. In short, the "natural," earlier described vis-a-vis Aristotle's organic conception of human life, could be transformed and re-employed as a moral category by reference instead to Macmurray's relational conception of human life. It seems the possibilities are rich. Harris, noting the unavoidable

⁸⁸ Errol Harris, review of Persons in Relation by John Macmurray, In Philosophical Review 72 (1963): 110.

organic quality of human life is less enthusiastic about Macmurray's scheme of the relational, as it merely subsumes the mechanical and the organic:

The real world is one of persons, not of mere organisms of of merely physical events. But it is at the same time not denied that persons inhabit bodies which are organically constituted and operate upon and with instruments which are physical objects obeying physical laws. How are we to understand the nature of free action in relation to these subordinate levels of existence (if such they are)? It is not easy to extract any intelligible answer from Macmurray's book.⁸⁹

I have two principal negative criticisms of Macmurray's work. First, in the overstated division in academic circles of the "lumpers" versus "splitters," i.e., thinkers who synthesize and relate as opposed to thinkers who dissect and criticize, Macmurray may have appropriated the weakness of each in certain passages of his work. In his commendable desire to develop a moral anthropology which reflects the unity of the human person, Macmurray too readily and too easily separates or combines one element of personhood with another. For example, the tripartite division of science/intellect, art/ emotion, and religion/ person is a bit too clean and self-contained a separation, as I have noted in my critical discussion above of the role of the emotions. Without sufficiently clarifying how one of these facets of existence relates to another, specifying how they work together in some things, for example, Macmurray is too content merely to multiply the points of disjunction. On

⁸⁹ Ibid., 109.

the other hand, Macmurray's propensity toward connecting schemes with each other is evidenced in a host of instances, to the point that the confused reader may be tempted to charge Macmurray with equivocation. For example, the science/art scheme is connected to the intellect/emotion scheme which is connected to the means/end scheme which is connected to the apprehension/valuation scheme. Often, the result of these multiple connections by which most everything is related to most everything else is an oversimplified view of the human person and human functioning. David Wright makes the same complaint against Macmurray in regard to his extensive discussion of freedom:

It is unfortunate that Professor Macmurray has chosen to continue to speak of 'freedom' and not 'freedoms'...There is no one freedom; there are as many as there are diverse uses for such expressions as 'free from...', 'free to...', 'free of...'. The attempt to straddle these, Colossus-like, by the use of the single ambiguous word 'freedom,'⁹⁰ without qualification, leads merely to confusion.

(This problem is further complicated by an expansive style, to which Blanshard also refers with chagrin: "On almost every page there are statements that seem to require argument but are offered as evidently true with a kind of magisterial assurance. On the other hand, no words are wasted."⁹¹)

⁹⁰ David Wright, review of John Macmurray, Conditions of Freedom, In Philosophical Quarterly 1 (1950-1951): 286.

⁹¹ Blanshard, 547.

One methodological example of Macmurray's "assured" approach is his seemingly arbitrary use of the "positive and negative modes" of human functioning as a convenient but ultimately unexplained way of joining some disjunctive facets of human life. Although he notes what he does not mean by the positive and negative existing together, his analogical definition limps. Are we to gather from his analogy of evil existing within good that the positive and the negative exist paradoxically, antithetically, concurrently? He has unfortunately cited a mystery in order to explain an enigma, and more needs to be said.

Second, even after reading a foundational work like The Structure of Religious Experience, I am left with the lingering methodological question, "How does God fit into all of this?" I wholeheartedly accept that religion has been "associated with the need that men have felt for help and assistance,"⁹² and that this is met in religion by its communitarian stress, but too much is presumed about the institution of religion as a given, and too little is said about how this community has been formed under the auspices of belief in God. Indeed, as I have earlier pointed out, Macmurray makes the legitimate assertion that no religious person can conceive of the universe as anything but personal, but we are left wondering whether one must see the relational and personal aspects of life in a necessarily religious light, that is, as foundations for belief in God.

⁹² Macmurray, The Structure of Religious Experience, 16.

Wright takes a different approach in describing the difficulty, the preeminence of belief in God in relation to the Christian experience of community, but he helps to exemplify my charge:

"...by claiming confirmation from Christianity for his view that 'the core of religion...is the expression and glorification of the consciousness of fellowship', Professor Macmurray surely falls short of doing justice to the peculiarly Christian conception of human brotherhood...[H]e fails to acknowledge that the Christian derives the universal brotherhood of man from the Fatherhood of God. It is not, for the Christian, an end self-evidently desirable; it is one to be sought on the basis of metaphysical belief and an historical fact. To present Christianity simply for a 'brotherhood of mankind' is to take the derivative for the ultimate in that faith."⁹³

As it presently stands, Macmurray's thesis seems much stronger in prescribing a direction or task for religion than it is in uncovering a means to belief through everyday experience. Perhaps Macmurray could have more modestly described his valuable project in a manner which emphasizes that strength. On the other hand, Macmurray might have more fully exploited one possible remedy to the weakness, the analogy in which he suggests that in our relations with one another, relations in which we discover that we are both subject and object, our relation with God is revealed, as "the universal is revealed in the particular."⁹⁴ This would augment his task of determining a path to God through common experience.

⁹³ Wright, 286.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 51.

IV. Implications of John Macmurray's Philosophy of Relational Moral Agency

Having presented Macmurray's theory of relational moral anthropology and a critical evaluation of it, we now turn briefly to a prospectus of the possible implications of the theory for our project at hand, the construction of a foundational ethic and critical method for pastoral moral discernment in the Roman Catholic tradition. As mentioned earlier, we will return to each theory and its implications in Chapter Five, when we will explicate critical junctures and divergences of the theories. For now, we will focus on the implied contributions of John Macmurray's philosophy for pastoral moral discernment.

The first implication of Macmurray's philosophy is that it presents and defends a truly relational moral anthropology. As we have noted above, for Macmurray, the moral life is the relational life, the quality of our interactions with others. The moral agent cannot be conceived as merely subject, but is the object of others' moral agencies. The give-and-take between these two subjective and objective realities, between Self and Other, as Macmurray would have it, is the core of the human moral intention and action. This bears out the contention which I have made in Chapter Two regarding the moral importance of pastoral discernment. Far from the peripheral or at least derivative role to which it has been assigned in the Catholic tradition of moral theology, this process of

discernment is, according to Macmurray's relational moral anthropology, the very essence of morality, and pastoral moral discernment assumes due gravity in the moral mission of the Church. Specifically, if the role of the pastoral minister in discernment with others has been formerly relegated to a pedagogical conduit for communicating official church teachings, Macmurray effectively challenges that notion, not only by promoting the very discernment process as a paradigm of moral agency, but also by casting suspicion on principles and teachings as the core of morality. Macmurray has diminished the value of blind obedience to principles as the moral "externality" to which Jesus vehemently objected.⁹⁵ Moreover, as a particularly intellectual formulation of the moral life, he notes that with the ascendancy of principles as the form and content of morality, duty as a rationally conceived concept assumes an inordinate role, and the significance of emotions in the moral life is neglected.⁹⁶

As we have seen, the emotions are of central significance to Macmurray's moral anthropology. With the emotions serving as a locus for valuation of things as ends in themselves, one must necessarily attend to the promptings of "the senses," cultivating an awareness of them. The result of such awareness of things in and of themselves is that through the emotions, we come to know and not just know

⁹⁵ Macmurray, Reason and Emotion, 125.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 123-124.

about others. In turn, this "knowing" of the Other in an emotional way offers to the agent an objectivity which Macmurray has characterized as "real" feeling. Further, these real feelings (and real thoughts) are encouraged and promoted by subjecting them to the evaluation of others in a dialogue.

To employ more traditional moral categories, Macmurray refers to an ability to get past the trap of self-deception by an intuitive, projectional, emotional means. The "unreal" feelings which obscure the moral life are illusory feelings, misrepresented feelings and insufficient feelings. This is to say that the emotions have both positive and negative moral import which ought not be underestimated. As a fundamental force with which one must contend, emotional concerns need to be appropriately addressed in a discernment setting in their urgency, pervasiveness, and particularity, and with the gravity they deserve. Specifically, the minister must tend to the emotional environment of honesty, openness, acceptance, and genuine dialogue, not merely because empathic regard is an effective counseling technique to elicit self-revelation, but because real knowing of a moral kind may be the fortunate product of such an encounter.

Of special importance in this regard are the emotions of love and fear, as they are the central moral motivations in Macmurray's theory. If, as Macmurray has suggested, the moral life is positively motivated by love leading to

mutuality and interdependence and negatively motivated by fear in its two forms of fighting or fleeing, then the challenge of the discernment process, which corresponds to the challenge of religion as Macmurray poses it, is to seek a transformation whereby fear is changed into love.

Naturally, those fears must be articulated and evaluated as the "negative" mode of moral motivations. (It is important to recall Macmurray's distinction between "motive" as a perduring phenomenon in the moral life, as opposed to "intention" which is part of a specific action. A transformation of the motive of fear would, for all of its difficulty, have impact on the shape of one's whole life, and might be the subject of ongoing moral discernment such as spiritual direction, whereas the more immediate transformation of intention might be the result of the specific discernment of a "case.") Little can be said in this regard by way of direct, specific implication for pastoral moral discernment, except to reiterate the above emphasis that simple empathic regard may provide a "host environment" to express and expel the fear which not only impedes the peace of mind but also the moral transformation of an individual.

As we have also seen, Macmurray theorizes two bases for morality. In one theory mentioned immediately above, morality is borne out of the positive and negative motivations of love and fear. Fear gives form to two moralities, the contemplative and the pragmatic. Love, on

the other hand, engenders a communal morality, which is an ideal. In the other theory, Macmurray sees morality as corresponding to three different kinds of freedom -- material, organic and personal. Noting the flaws in the first two, he again arrives at a communal (personal) form of morality. In both formulations, communal life assumes critical importance. It is in the personal and mutual aspects of common life, in the relationships which are cultivated, that human flourishing occurs. Moral maturity consists in an interdependence by which the agent is not merely responding to the laws of the material world or the demands of the organic world in the latter formulation; nor is the agent merely reacting to the promptings of fearful dependence, as outlined in the former.

Macmurray uses both of these as backdrops to propose his moral anthropology in which community is the place of moral maturity. Although personal friendship is the "form of the personal," community is the broader moral category which includes the many friendships which are the forms of the moral life. In the ideal community, each member is positively motivated, heterocentric, a distinct individual and "realizing himself in and through each other."⁹⁷ Indeed, for Macmurray, this is what religion is all about -- the genuine communion of persons in the heterocentric (Other-centered), positive mode. The mission of religion is to create, maintain and deepen this ideal of community and

⁹⁷ Macmurray, Persons in Relation, 158.

further extend it by the complete transformation of fear as a motive. Macmurray states that this is the "redemptive" meaning of religion.⁹⁸

A realized community, then, is the place of moral flourishing. In a sense, it is the end of the moral life. This notion has strong implications for pastoral moral discernment. Proceeding from Macmurray's assertion that the isolated agent is a self-contradiction, moral discernment ought never be posed as private activity. In the case of the one seeking assistance, this means that no "case" can be considered without determining an effect on the shape of a community and the person's involvement in it. In the case of the minister, this means that as the leader of the community, he or she stands in the position of promoter of the foundational ethic of mutual relations in community. This may be as simple as convening the community, but it may be as complex as assisting a member of the community in determining a course of action which most radically corresponds to mutuality as a moral category.

For the shape of moral reflection in the Roman Catholic tradition, i.e., a "critical method," as I have posed it, this would mean that the symbolic role of the pastoral minister would shift in traditional Catholic thought and practice from being the most immediate representative of pedagogical "line authority" to being the most immediate representative of the interests of the community, however

⁹⁸ Ibid., 163-165.

difficult those often disparate interests may be to determine. This may seem to be splitting hairs, as one may conceive of "pedagogical line authority" as subsumed in the "interests of community," but if reciprocity and mutuality are the guidelines by which genuine "community" is established, then this applies to the pastoral minister as well, and teaching is only one part of moral leadership which promotes relationality. Listening is the other.

Macmurray attaches religious significance to the relationality which undergirds his moral philosophy. Although, as I have pointed out, Macmurray does not articulate this as well as he might for the benefit of nonbelievers (See above, "Critical Evaluation of Macmurray's Philosophy"), he does demonstrate that personal relationships and mutual dialogue have religious meaning, that is, they speak to us of the God who stands in relation to us in a "personal universe." For believers, the communal ethic outlined above has theological significance beyond mere mutuality with other members of the community: We can discern the movement of a God-who-relates in our lives through the moral promptings of the community to whom we relate. Moreover, for the purposes of a critical method of pastoral moral discernment, the believer is able to detect the movement of God in a relational tone and execution of the encounter between the minister and the one seeking assistance. This religious dimension is further illuminated by Macmurray's notion of history, whereby the believer sees

all of history as the action of a Single Intention. The opportunity would be rich for the pastoral minister to use this theory as an acceptable rationale for establishing a religious epistemology, a way of knowing based on faith, in which God is witnessed in the circumstances of one's life. These would not be artificial religious veneers added to a discernment process of an otherwise practical tenor. This would lend a truly "pastoral" dimension to "pastoral moral discernment." As we shall discuss in Chapter Five, this is the theoretical difference, and in the case of our project, the theoretical advance, of Macmurray in relation to Haan.

Certainly one of the central bases upon which Macmurray's theory rests is the assertion that action is the positive mode of the negative mode of reflection. Both are "activities," but action contains the intention which is the fruit of the reflective mode. Macmurray has alternately explained this as thought being potential activity, while action is kinetic activity. The ascendancy of the "I do" position in Macmurray makes action the central criterion for moral anthropology. Accounting for this, the implication for pastoral moral discernment is that in the course of comprehensive moral discernment, the minister and the one seeking assistance will not only determine the ethical grounds on which to act; they will also construct a strategy for acting. According to Macmurray, the explicit rationale for moral discernment would be that it would culminate in action. Knowing this would seem to determine the quality of

the discernment as inductive, responding to the particular demands of the agent and the situation.

Finally, it is evident, even from our discussions up to this point, that much is shared between the theories of morality of Norma Haan and her associates and John Macmurray. We will have an opportunity later to explore at length these similarities, as well as the differences. Suffice it to say for the present, however, that the last and, perhaps for my thesis, the most important implication of John Macmurray's philosophy is that in its close coincidence with Haan's thesis of interactional morality, it suggests that our project at hand, the development of a comprehensive ethic and critical method for pastoral moral discernment which is founded on "true" and "best" theories, is possible. By the strong convergence of the two, we see the prospect of a "natural" morality and its concomitant form of moral reflection which is empirically founded on experimental psychology and rationally grounded in a philosophical moral anthropology.

We have appropriated the portrayal by Haan and her associates of the "social" nature of morality as the centerpiece of our thesis; Macmurray's theory views the basis for morality as the "personal community." In examining the perspective of Haan's second dialogue partner, James Gustafson, in the next chapter, we turn to the discipline of Christian theology to inform our discussion,

paying particular attention to the ways in which the life of a specifically Christian community might refine or critique our proposal for a foundational ethic and critical method for pastoral moral discernment in the Roman Catholic tradition.

CHAPTER 4

INTERACTIONAL MORAL AGENCY AND GOD: THE THEOLOGICAL ETHICS OF JAMES M. GUSTAFSON

In introducing John Macmurray's moral philosophy as one of the conversation partners with the theory of morality offered by Norma Haan and her associates, we begin to see how normative considerations might strengthen and complement the empirical assertions of interactional moral psychology. In these two approaches to morality, we combine both "thick" and "thin" assumptions of value, as we have previously articulated them. As I have noted, we have not done this merely to alleviate the suspicion of constructing a foundational ethic and critical method for Roman Catholic pastoral moral discernment on largely social scientific grounds. Indeed, as we stated early on, sufficient warrants exist in the Catholic tradition to incorporate the insights of empirical science in Catholic moral thought. We seek to derive a truly comprehensive foundational ethic and critical method for Catholic pastoral discernment, i.e., one which relies upon multiple sources; and so we have initiated a theoretical relationship between Haan's psychology and Macmurray's philosophy with hopes of conducting further conversation.

This is ultimately a theological project. While it is true that I have designated Haan's proposal as the foundational thesis for our purposes, and I have substantiated that approach, our aim is to develop an ethic and method which serves Christian moral reflection. As such, a critical partner in the forthcoming conversation will be a theorist who represents moral agency and action as articulated in theological ethics.

In proposing new directions for pastoral moral discernment, we must explore the implications of religious belief and tradition for the moral life. The questions which emerge in this regard are manifold: In regard to a "foundational ethic," how does belief in God affect the grounds for an interactional morality? Does it simply describe a "meta-ethic," a reason to be moral? Does it imply obligations, points of reference for conduct, a source of conversion and transformation for the moral agent? How might we articulate that belief itself as an interaction with God? Is that divine interaction analogous to human interaction, or vice versa? In regard to a "critical method," what can we say about the relationship between discernment and belief in God? How might we describe and prescribe the contours of a Church which supports and engages serious Christian moral reflection? What is the role of the minister in such moral reflection? How does the Church differentiate its mission and purpose from other sources of assistance to the person?

With a view toward addressing some of these questions, in this chapter I will expose and analyze the theological ethics of James M. Gustafson, whose work has been guided by these and other fundamental inquiries about the role of religious and Christian belief in the moral life.

Prior to those presentations, I will explain my selection of Gustafson from the broad field of theological ethicists as the one I wish to engage in theoretical conversation with Haan and Macmurray. A number of factors were important in the choice.

First, Gustafson has demonstrated a consistent breadth of interest in both the methodological and topical issues of Christian theological ethics. He has served as a prominent spokesperson and source for the "state of the discipline" for a sustained period of time, particularly in the past twenty years in which the field of theological ethics has greatly expanded and evolved. Indeed, many of his writings have been critical expositions of other colleagues' opinions and their implications for the development of theological ethics. As such, his collective work has earned and continues to retain a credibility which only enhances the sustained efforts of a respected senior scholar in an academic field.

Second, and a direct result of his breadth, is Gustafson's balanced, characteristically middle-course positions on the issues of Christian ethics, especially methodological issues. During a time of radical change and

growth in the field, Gustafson has complemented his "reporting" with proposals which reflect his own considered judgments. He is widely known as a synthetic yet original ethicist, often gleaning the best of a range of theoretical options.

An excellent example of Gustafson's synthetic style and interest is his presentation of the rapprochement between Roman Catholic and Protestant ethics.¹ Accompanying his accurate portrayal of the history, theology, philosophy and practical orientation of each tradition is a constructive proposal for the growing influence of each upon the other. This thematic sensitivity and comprehensive mastery of the relationship between Protestant and Roman Catholic ethics has enabled and even prompted me to employ Gustafson, himself a Protestant, in the service of constructing a foundational ethic and critical method for Roman Catholic pastoral moral discernment. As Vatican documentation attests, the Catholic tradition stands to benefit much from respectful dialogue with Christians of other communions.² Moreover, I would make the claim that Gustafson's breadth of sources and synthetic balance to which I allude above are appropriately associated with a catholic, as well as

¹ See James M. Gustafson, Protestant and Roman Catholic Ethics: Prospects for Rapprochement (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978)

² Walter M. Abbott, S.J., The Documents of Vatican II (New York: Guild Press, 1966), Chapter 1, No. 4, 347.

Catholic, perspective. As Richard McBrien has concluded about "general characteristics of Catholicism,"

As its very name suggests, Catholicism is characterized by a radical openness to all truth and to every value. It is comprehensive and all-embracing toward the totality of Christian experience and tradition, in all the theological, doctrinal, spiritual, liturgical, canonical, institutional and social richness and diversity of that experience and tradition.³

With this, I would hope to put to rest the inevitable but nonetheless parochial question, "Why employ the ethical thought of a Protestant theologian in the theoretical dialogue which undergirds a proposal for Roman Catholic pastoral moral discernment?" In short, the answer is that Gustafson's work is congruent with the Catholic tradition of balance and openness, and Catholics stand to learn much from that in Gustafson's thought which may be construed as "Protestant."

As further support of my choice of Gustafson, I would cite several other features of his work which make him particularly well suited to the project at hand. First, Gustafson is theologically empirical in his method in ethics. He begins with human experience and proceeds to interpret it and draw normative assertions from it. As we shall see, this phenomenological approach, very American in its orientation and comfortable with an historical rather than a naturalistic method, is most amenable to the

³ Richard M. McBrien, Catholicism (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1980), 1173, 1175.

complementary relationship with social science which I hope to propose.

Second, Gustafson has a consistently articulated view of moral agency, a moral psychology of the person. As with Haan and Macmurray, this moral anthropology is relational, dynamic and multi-dimensional, taking into account, for example, the effect of emotions upon moral thought and action. The addition which Gustafson makes to this multi-valent scheme is the influence of religious faith on the moral life of the individual.

Finally, Gustafson is a theological ethicist who is sympathetic to pastoral life. He is familiar with the issues of ministry, and his incisive comments about practical concerns in the local church reveal a native interest in pastoral theology and practice. He writes with ease and insight about such issues as the communal nature of the church, the role of the minister, and the relationship between church and society. More specifically, he has addressed both the issues of moral discernment and moral discourse within a church community. His theories, then, are of direct interest and applicability to our project.

Following a presentation of Gustafson's theological ethics and his pastoral perspective, I will offer a critical review of his thought by myself and some of his colleagues in theological ethics. As I hope to show, I take exception with some of his writings, particularly his later work. Consequently, they will have a carefully nuanced and limited

applicability to my thesis, as will become evident in the final section of the chapter, in which I will draw out some initial implications of Gustafson's thought for our task. But on the whole, Gustafson provides a promising theological perspective for the dialogue in Chapter Five.

I. Gustafson's Theological Ethics

The Form of the Moral Life

Gustafson's conception of the moral life may be roughly divided into two major theoretical concerns. First, prescinding from the issue of the influence of religious faith, he characterizes the basic form of human moral life. This established, he goes on to formulate the effects of faith and religion on personal moral life and, more generally, a system of ethics. In this section, I wish to follow these two basic conceptions, attending first to what may be termed the "form" of the moral life and then to the "content."

Like Haan and Macmurray, Gustafson views the moral life as interactions between persons. The moral life is a matter of "agents" or "subjects" responding to the initiatives of other agents by taking account of the meaning of those initiatives and then acting according to one's own and others' purposes and intentions. It is a thoroughly dynamic model of the moral life, by which the agent is open to intervention, resistance and amendment by the other:

Responsible moral action involves at least these salient features. There is an evaluative assessment of the circumstances in which action

takes place, an interpretation of what the possible courses of action are in the situation. There is reflection about what ends are to be sought, what intentions are to direct behavior, what rules are to be followed; there is, in short, a process of moral decision-making.⁴

Lest this sound inordinately occasionalistic, Gustafson does suggest that there are perduring features of moral agents which enter into the decision-making process. As we will discuss later, each person brings to the various interactions which constitute the "moral dimensions of experience" a relatively stable personal history:

There is reflection about the person's moral commitments, loyalties and beliefs, and what light they shed on the circumstances, on the proper decision, and on the appropriate means of action. There is the person as an agent, his unconscious determinant, character, dispositions, attitudes and emotions, as well as his capacities to make rational judgments.⁵

The moral life is more than mere decision-making for Gustafson. Unless the process of decision-making culminates in action which is generated by the moral agent, full responsiveness has not been met on the part of that agent:

As agents, they have the capacities to determine themselves to some extent; they can intend to exercise their capacities in certain ways and can follow through on such intentions...Persons are not merely passive chips floating on rivers of events and circumstances and carried by whatever currents flow. Rather, they are agents, or actors.⁶

⁴ James M. Gustafson, Theology and Christian Ethics, (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1974), 62.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ James M. Gustafson, Can Ethics Be Christian? (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 12.

How might we concisely state Gustafson's conception of the interactional form of the moral life? As a summary of his reflection on the story with which he introduces Can Ethics Be Christian?, a recounting of a personal experience in which a professed non-Christian colleague exercises remarkable moral virtue, Gustafson draws general conclusions about the form of the moral life: First, moral activity comes about within relationships between persons and other persons, or persons and institutions. Second, these relationships are characterized by mutuality -- mutuality of dependence and reliability. Rules and obligations arise from this mutuality. Third, the relationships are not static; the change inherent in them is the "necessary condition for the intentional alteration of states of affairs or courses of events." Fourth, the interactions between the persons or entities are somewhat determinant, i.e., both subjects have certain relatively fixed limitations and possibilities to which the agents must attend. Fifth, while that determinacy is true, there is also a certain measure of indeterminacy, i.e., "What 'I am' is to some extent designatable, but as a result of action and interaction, I shall not be precisely what I am now," and the same is true of "the other." Sixth, the connections within the interactions of the moral life run in several directions, e.g., not only between two persons but also over a certain period of time, so that relationships have past, present and future dimensions. Finally, persons may indeed

be considered as agents -- capable of action according to purposes.⁷

For Gustafson, even though the form, or "conditions,"⁸ of the moral life can be articulated as interactional in character, he notes nonetheless that there are different "grounds" for the interactions. That is, within the interaction, people use different criteria for judging the rightness/wrongness or goodness/badness of a given course of action. While some agents may employ the criteria of rules or obligations, others may refer to the building and breaking of trust in a relationship, rights owed to individual persons in a given system, the short-term or long-term consequences of particular actions, or to the morally fitting thing to do. Those criteria in turn give rise to some of the possible styles of moral decision-making, such as the simple following of law; the "homo faber," or person-as-designer; the person-as-responder, in the case of the one seeking the morally fitting course of action; and cost-benefit analysis, in the case of those interested in the criterion of utility in terms of consequences.⁹

⁷ Ibid, 13-14.

⁸ Gustafson is careful to point out that these assertions do not constitute a pattern or the pattern of the moral life; they are instead "generalizations about the fundamental conditions necessary for moral judgments, moral decisions and moral actions to occur." (See p. 14 of Can Ethics Be Christian?)

⁹ Gustafson, Can Ethics Be Christian?, 15-19.

As is evident by the discussions above, decision-making is of key importance to Gustafson. Again, at this point prescinding from the influence of religious belief on moral agency and action, one can outline the facets of "discernment" as Gustafson has consistently articulated them. Good moral discernment, that is, moral decision-making which sufficiently accounts for the multi-dimensional aspects of humans in relationships with each other and with particular institutions, is for Gustafson fundamentally a matter of good powers of and training in perception. It is, as Gustafson has alternately called it, the ability to "see all that there is," to be "penetrating and accurate in observation" of a situation, the ability to "locate a detail," to be "accurate in perception."¹⁰

Gustafson begins his explicit consideration of moral discernment by noting what discernment is not. It is not a simple imposition of a model or scheme of analysis. It is not syllogistic moves of deductive logic from first principles to particular circumstances. It is not merely the accumulation of information regarding the issue requiring discernment, but the careful distinguishing of important from unimportant information, as well as the determination of the relationship of parts of the information to the whole body of information and the suggestion of "imaginative inferences" from the inferences gathered. It is not merely emotional or expressive reactions to the issue requiring

¹⁰ Gustafson, Theology and Christian Ethics, 100-101.

discernment but also includes supportive reasoning. Finally, it is not a stubborn mode of making a judgment; it entails sensitivity and flexibility.¹¹

Without descending into much detail, Gustafson broadly outlines good moral discernment as that which "involves a perception of what is morally fitting in the place and time of action."¹² In short, excellence in moral discernment involves various combinations of: a reading of what is truly at stake from the perspectives of the moral participants, i.e., persons with particular histories, backgrounds and sensibilities "other than rational aspects of selfhood," and the beliefs, rules and principles of those persons.¹³ Gustafson has also characterized discernment or good moral decision-making as striking the balance between personal "involvement" and personal "disinterest." That is, in the involvement of moral discernment, we engage in interaction with others and perceive things about ourselves and others as moral agents: imagination, possibilities, different natures of the problem at hand, interpretation, sensibilities, empathy; dispositions are formed, powers and limitations are made known, we gain confidence as moral actors and we see the presence of evil.¹⁴ The rational "disinterest" of discernment, on the other hand, enables

¹¹ Ibid., 102-105.

¹² Ibid., 106.

¹³ Ibid., 106-108.

¹⁴ Ibid., 39 ff.

analysis which "is essential if we are to be cogent in the expenditure of our passions and our other powers to rectify what is judged to be a moral wrong."¹⁵

As we briefly noted above, Gustafson's notion of moral agency goes beyond the resolution of moral dilemmas by sound moral discernment, even though this is a central concern of his systematic treatment of the moral life. For Gustafson, the discerning interaction occurs between and among agents who are persons with particular enduring constellations of traits which enable and sometimes obstruct that sound discernment and good moral action; Gustafson "suggests that it is appropriate to assume some degree of predictability of behavior in persons."¹⁶ Whether this is articulated as "consistency," "character," "integrity" or "style,"¹⁷ Gustafson claims that such habitual moral behavior does indeed exist. In providing some account of these factors, he points to two types of predictability factors -- those over which the agent has no control and those which are of the agent's doing. The first set includes genetic endowment, psychiatric illness, unconscious motives and environmental conditions. The second includes personal beliefs, dispositions and intentions (both general and specific intentions).¹⁸ Avoiding the charge of moral

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Gustafson, Can Ethics Be Christian?, 28.

¹⁷ Ibid., 25-28.

¹⁸ Ibid., 31.

determinism, he ultimately calls these factors of consistent behavior "conditions of the person which persist, which are not whimsical and episodic, and which function in various ways with reference to action,"¹⁹ or, more specifically, they are "conditions which make possible and likely certain sorts of actions without determining in themselves what action will be done."²⁰ As we shall discuss later, Gustafson distinguishes himself among the three moral theorists in this thesis by espousing a notion of consistent behavior, character, or, as Gustafson would have it, "the sort of person one is."²¹

The Role of Christian Belief in the Moral Life

Gustafson has devoted a substantial part of his writing to the issue of the impact of religious belief on the moral life of the individual. The scope of this presentation does not allow that body of thought to be conveyed in its fullness, but it is important for our purposes that the reader have a general sense of how Gustafson has answered the question, "What differences do beliefs in God and Christ make to morality?" Having outlined the elements of Gustafson's conception of general moral life -- the interactional nature of morality, the importance of discernment, the convictions about character -- we turn to a modestly broad consideration of Gustafson's ideas about the

¹⁹ Ibid., 46.

²⁰ Ibid., 47.

²¹ Ibid., 29.

influence of religious belief on moral discernment and action. I have divided that consideration into three principal discussions which reflect some of Gustafson's primary contributions to theological ethics: belief in God and the moral life, Gustafson's "theocentric ethics," and the relationship of Christ to the moral life of the Christian.

The most fundamental assertion about the influence of faith on morality is that faith provides a compelling answer to the "meta-ethical" query, "Why be moral?" Presuming that belief in God provides that compelling answer, Gustafson explores what effect such belief actually has on the moral life. In Gustafson's work, the consistent question which guides the moral thought and action of the believer is "What is God enabling and requiring me to be and to do?" This is the general rubric under which nearly all of Gustafson's thought about the role of belief may be placed. His foundational idea about the believer is that

[T]he horizon of his vision, both of his responsibilities and of his aspirations, extends beyond the time and space box in which he fixes his moral action for reasons of practical necessity to a power which renders new possibilities and new hopes. His involved discernment is not only in finding what is right and good in the circumstances in which he acts, but in seeking what God is requiring and making possible.²²

²² Gustafson, Theology and Christian Ethics, 42.

Proceeding from this guiding moral criterion for the believer is a discernment which aims at the "fitting"²³ action, an action which adequately responds to the judgment about what God is enabling and requiring one to do. It is important to note that Gustafson amends the guiding criterion of the "command-of-God" theologians such as Barth, whose question is "What is God doing?" Gustafson rejects this for two reasons. First, he is wary of any unmediated experience of God. Second, he views human moral agency, influenced as it is in believers by convictions of faith, as free of complete divine determination.²⁴

This model of the believer's moral life takes for granted an immanent and communicative God. This divine communication is, for believers, encountered in the interactions of human life. That is, for the believer, an event is not merely an event, a conversation is not merely a conversation. All of human life, but perhaps most especially relations between humans and those between humans and institutions are occasions of God's intervention in life, enabling and requiring certain kinds of action -- fitting, moral action:

The religious person and community, in its experiencing of the reality of God and believing in God, has another dimension, or horizon, in moral life. In a sense, the relations involved in human moral activity are more "extensive" than appears; the interactions go beyond those we immediately perceive to be significant in the

²³ Ibid., 118.

²⁴ Gustafson, Can Ethics Be Christian?, 156-157.

determination of our actions. In religious language, persons are not only related to other humans, events and to institutions but are related to God in and through these relations.²⁵

Because of the significance of human relations as loci of God's manifestations, community, and particularly, a community of other believers, sustains the faith of the believer and prompts his or her fitting moral action by its ongoing interpretation of the reality of God. But how does the belief in God, mediated through a community, specifically affect moral discernment and action? Gustafson notes three ways. Implicit in the following discussions is the preliminary establishment of what constitutes distinctively religious ethics, but for our purposes, we can rest content with the more focused concern of the ways in which faith affects the moral life.

First, belief in God engenders "senses" in the believing person which in turn give rise to moral discernment and action. Images of God evoke certain dispositions which are validated in the experience of the believer. God, then, grounds the moral activity of the person by disposing the person in a certain way. Employing the terms of our previous discussion of Gustafson's notion of the form of the moral life, we could say that these senses of God inform and transform the personal "consistency," "character," "integrity" or "style" of the believing person by precipitating certain moral dispositions

²⁵ Ibid., 86.

from personally experienced images of God. Gustafson develops two separate schemes in this regard. In the first, he shows that a host of biblical and personal images such as Creator, Shepherd, Master, King, Father, Love and Ground of Hope would engender such senses of personal disposition as dependence, confidence in care, service, obedience, childlikeness, love and possibility, respectively.²⁶

Later, he consolidates the scheme into six central senses of God, rooted in experiences of God and articulated beliefs about God. He lists these senses, their correlative experiences of God, and the moral qualities which they engender by way of "character" formation and transformation: Dependence, rooted in awareness of God's infinitude and our corresponding finiteness, affords the moral qualities of trust, self-criticism, knowledge of limitations, recognition and limits to the claims of moral certitude. Gratitude, rooted in awareness of God's beneficence, affords the ability to do for others the good which God has done for humanity. Repentance, rooted in awareness of God as a moral authority, allows one to adjust one's moral purposes with the perceived will of God. Obligation, rooted in the awareness of God as orderer and sustainer of life, engenders in one a personal and social responsibility which is aligned with the orders of creation. Possibility, rooted in the experience of God as a source of hope, opposes despair and offers the sense of opportunity. Direction, associated with

²⁶ See Ibid., 87-91.

the experience of God as telos, creates a sense of a path through human circumstances to spiritual ends.²⁷

The second way in which belief in God, mediated through a community, can effect moral discernment and action is by the believing community's interpretation of the events and circumstances of human life and history through religious symbols and language. For example, a struggle against a particular instance of slavery in human history might be interpreted through the biblical symbolic imagery of "liberation," thus affirming the freeing of slaves by analogy to the freeing of the God's chosen, the Israelites, from Egyptian rule. Another example might be the interpretation of a specific instance of human suffering and triumph in the cross-and-resurrection mystery of Jesus.²⁸ Gustafson cites the difficulties inherent in this system of relating events to a religious paradigm, two prominent ones being the authority of such symbols and the criteria by which one chooses one symbol or expression over another.²⁹ Gustafson's own answer to these difficulties is that in regard to the authority of a particular symbol, it should lie in its ability to disclose the significance of events which might otherwise have not been perceived.³⁰ Additionally, it should at least be intelligible to those

²⁷ Ibid., 92-94.

²⁸ Ibid., 118-120.

²⁹ Ibid., 132-142.

³⁰ Ibid., 123.

outside the particular community employing the symbol.³¹ In regard to the criteria employed, Gustafson proposes a "looser," multi-level scheme of determination: The symbol or expression should answer to the theological norm of God's will for creation, to the relevance of it to the events and circumstances at hand, to the ethical concepts warranted by other symbols and experiences of the religious community, and to the critical scrutiny of others involved in the same kinds of activities in question.³²

The third way in which belief in God, mediated through a community, effects moral discernment and action is through the relation of religious beliefs to moral principles and values. This amounts to the various means by which "religious" reasons for particular courses of action, i.e., reasons grounded in faith and the articulation of beliefs, are joined to or distinguished from "moral" reasons, i.e., reasons which would draw acknowledgment and assent from all reasonable persons.³³ As Gustafson points out, the two theoretical extremes as demonstrated in Christian ethics, would be that Christian principles are always defensible on rational grounds, or that Christian principles are only intelligible to followers of Jesus.³⁴

³¹ Ibid., 128-129.

³² Ibid., 142-143.

³³ Ibid., 145-146.

³⁴ Ibid., 167.

Between these two extremes, namely, a complete overlap of the religious and the ethical, and a complete separation of the ethical from the religious, there lie past attempts in theological ethics to negotiate this relationship. For example, the "command-of-God" approach of neo-orthodox theological ethics, in which one determines "what God is doing" and then proceeds in rational fashion from that point; the natural law approach, in which God is the end of all creation and one may look to normative religious texts such as scripture to confirm what one may access by reason; and the approach of "American Protestant ethics," represented by ethicists such as Rauschenbusch, Reinhold Niebuhr, Bennett and Ramsey, in which what is known through biblical accounts is confirmed in experience.³⁵

Gustafson supports the separation of articulated religious belief from strictly moral reasoning, as again demonstrated in the case of Christian ethics:

Indeed, since the Christian theologian shares in the general moral experiences of secular people, and since one facet of his work that is theologically warranted is the inferring of principles and values from common experience, he or she need not in every practical circumstance make a particular theological case for what is formulated. The theologian ought, however, to be able³⁶ to make a Christian theological case to do so.

³⁵ Ibid., 148-154.

³⁶ Ibid., 163.

At the same time, Gustafson acknowledges that beliefs of a particular historical community such as that of Christianity do have normative authority for people in that community:

That authority does not lead to a whole unique set of moral values and principles...but there are certain values and principles that can be rationally inferred from the historically particular media that direct action in a distinctive way.³⁷

Gustafson's conclusion regarding the relationship of "moral" and "religious" reasons for action is a natural outgrowth of the above discussions:

The moral act is qualified by the religious significance it has for the agent in the light of his or her reasons for being moral without collapsing the two references of "good." It is a good act for two distinctive but "overlapping" reasons; it is a morally right or good act because of its consequences or because of the immediate moral principles that governed it. It is also a "good" act for the moral ultimate "theological" or "religious" reasons it was done; it was done in fidelity to God, or done to honor God.³⁸

Thus we see that for Gustafson, belief in God is significant in the moral life in at least three ways. First, through the believer's experience of God or of senses of God, his or her dispositions, attitudes and integrity -- in short, character -- are informed and transformed, and impulses of a moral order are the result. Second, by the articulation of human experiences through religious symbols and expressions of belief, the believer is able to make moral sense of his or her experience in relating it by

³⁷ Ibid., 168.

³⁸ Ibid., 174.

analogy to the perceived activity of God in history. Religious symbols also help to disclose moral elements of our experience which might otherwise go undisclosed. Finally, in determining the reasons for our courses of moral action, believers can look not only to those which would hold for all rational persons, but also to those "reasons" which are derived from a particular expression of their religious belief; that is, the reasons for "good" actions overlap, but they may very well be grounded in fidelity to God or honor of God.

Theocentric Ethics

Although, as we have seen, there is much in Gustafson's theological ethics which acknowledges a God who is active in the human realm, he refrains from delineating who that God is and how that God is present to human persons. While Gustafson is most comfortable asserting that the basis of human morality is interactive, and that this interaction is a medium through which God is communicated, Gustafson does not assert that God's action may be directly known in the dynamics of that human interaction. This is not to contradict the above discussion, but to sufficiently nuance the statements which may on first reading seem to suggest that God and God's purposes may readily and clearly be discerned by human capacities -- in senses of God, in symbols from a faith tradition, or in "reasons" derived from belief in God.

In his later work, Gustafson clearly and forcefully contends that although God is present in the interdependence of the universe, humanity may not presume that God is particularly active, or for that matter, particularly interested, in human interactions. While for Gustafson it is fair to say that human beings seek the presence and affirmation of God in their interactions, to contrive God's special attention, delight, or censure in those interactions is the height of anthropocentrism.

This, of course, is an unsettling thesis. Gustafson carefully presented it and its application to practical moral reasoning in his two-volume work, Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective. Since its publication, the book has stirred much controversy among theological ethicists who once saw in Gustafson a theoretical ally but who have since had to criticize this thesis at its very core.

In this section, I intend to outline the important features of Gustafson's "theocentric ethics." Given my task of adequately representing the core ideas of his theological ethics, I would be remiss to omit this important, if relatively late, development in Gustafson thought. Suffice it to say at this point in my presentation that I do not concur with all of his contentions which I will relate below. As I hope to show later in Section III of this chapter, my differences with Gustafson in his "theocentric ethics" are over some fundamental issues. At the same time, I intend to show that his contribution is not vitiated, and

that many elements in Gustafson's "theocentric ethics" can be fruitfully employed in my thesis.

Theocentric ethics is submitted by Gustafson as a response and a reaction to what he sees as the predominant strains of thought in theological ethics. Even more basically, he reacts to religious instrumentality on the part of humanity:

My contention is that in our own time, as much as in any other, religion is propagated for its utility value to individuals and communities ...Both individual pieties and social pieties become instrumental not to gratitude to God, the honor of God, or service of God, but to sustaining purposes to which the Deity is incidental, if not something of an encumbrance.³⁹

The result of such instrumentality, according to Gustafson, is that humans lose a rightful sense of finitude in the face of God and concomitantly lose a perspective which accurately orders relationships and institutions.⁴⁰ The resulting narrowness of perspective has given birth to ethics in which humans seek to justify their own actions as "moral," employing the rationale that such actions are divinely sanctioned. This, as Gustafson has defined it, is "anthropocentric" ethics.

The forms of such anthropocentric ethics are many, including the bulk of moral philosophy,⁴¹ as well as the

³⁹ James M. Gustafson, Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective, Volume One (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 18.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 20.

⁴¹ Ibid., 81.

natural law tradition.⁴² Gustafson applauds certain efforts at "theonomous" ethics by moral theologians such as Moltmann, Rahner, Lehmann, H. Richard Niebuhr and some of the process theologians, but these fall short of his expectations for various reasons.⁴³

Gustafson does acknowledge that humans can only ultimately rely on limited powers of perception to find the hand of God in their world, and that theology must attend to that reality. Moreover, as we have shown above, the interactional character of human life is dignified once again as the locus of the activity of God, and the construction of a theological ethics is dependent on experience:

Human experience is prior to reflection...Religion and morality are aspects of human experience...Indeed, there is no way in which a certain kind of anthropocentrism can be avoided. If there is knowledge of God it is human knowledge of God; it is knowledge of God mediated through human experiences, either of one's own, of a community in which one participates, or of another person... Neither theology nor ethics has fulfilled its intellectual purpose if it merely describes religious and moral experience, or religious and moral dimensions of aspects of experience.⁴⁴

Further, that human experience in which God acts and from which theological ethics is derived is multi-valent, that is, not entirely deciphered in rational terms. As such, it is more inaccessible than many would deem. Experience is a

⁴² Ibid., 91-92.

⁴³ See the discussion in Ibid., 31-62.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 115.

unity of affective, intellectual, rational, and aesthetic elements, and therefore,

...morality as an aspect of human experience might not be neatly divisible into aspects of the person as some moral theorists hold...In morality and religion there are affective as well as cognitive and volitional aspects of experience...in the rawest moments of moral concern these aspects of the self are commingled.⁴⁵

Given the locus of God in human experience, how does the believer detect the movement and activity of God? For Gustafson, it is by analogically extrapolating from the experience of interaction with another person:

There are many who respond to another "dimension" in their affective lives and in their dispositions who do not name "gods" or "God." But for those who are identified with particular communities, the step is overt, acknowledged, and articulated in the symbols and concepts that construe the world of experience theologically and religiously. The step of monotheism is distinctive. From the experience of others or of otherness it, for reasons of heart and mind, respects and reveres an Other; it acknowledges dependence upon and expresses gratitude to an Other; it develops a sense of obligation to an Other, and a sense of repentance in the face ^{of} its failure to relate properly to the Other.⁴⁶

What are we to make of this divine presence in human interactions and divine significance of human interactions? Might we draw a conclusion of divine determinism from this? Gustafson answers a resounding "No." For Gustafson, this presence of God in human interactions demonstrates a continuity of humanity with the rest of nature -- an interdependence -- and in no way denies "the import of our

⁴⁵ Ibid., 118-119.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 135-136.

capacities for agency."⁴⁷ But it does affirm the appropriateness of an interactive or response-oriented model of moral action for humanity. Gustafson distinguishes his version of this response-oriented model from that of his mentor, H. Richard Niebuhr. Niebuhr, influenced by George Herbert Mead and Martin Buber, was able to see God's action in all human actions. Gustafson contrasts his own view with that of Niebuhr:

He had more confidence in the agency model of God than I have. In distinction from that view, I believe we can appropriately say only that we have capacities to respond to persons and events in an interactive way, and that through those actions we respond to the divine governance, to the powers that bear down on us and sustain us. We have capacities to discern in particular events and relations something of what the divine governance requires, what our appropriate actions and relations are to nature, to other persons, and so forth.⁴⁸

As such, discernment is a central element in Gustafson's theocentric ethics, as it was in his earlier thought. Such discernment is an effort to interpret divine governance in historical circumstances and respond to God's enabling and requiring, rather than an effort to adjust our actions to a "changeless moral order," as the natural law tradition would prescribe.⁴⁹ What might finally be discerned in such a scheme? According to Gustafson, "what can be discerned, to put the matter abstractly, are the

⁴⁷ Ibid., 273.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 274.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 338.

necessary conditions for life to be sustained and developed."⁵⁰ As far as a criterion for moral action, Gustafson submits that these "necessary conditions"

"...are not a sufficient basis for ethics; specific ends and moral principles are not simply deduced from them. But they are a necessary basis for ethics...To relate things in a manner appropriate to their relations to God requires that these patterns and processes be perceived and conceptualized as accurately as possible, and that their conditions be met."⁵¹

As Gustafson himself admits, "Ethics in the theocentric perspective...does not provide absolute moral certainty or eliminate tragedy."⁵² It does, however, point our discernment in a certain direction: We become "participants"⁵³ in a discernment process in which we relate to things, as parts to a whole,⁵⁴ in a manner appropriate to their relations to God, that is, a relationship of things to people, people to people, all in the context of belief in God.

In sum, the contributions of theocentric ethics to our discussion of Gustafson's notion of the role of religious belief in the moral life are limited but important. First, theocentric ethics confirms that God is the locus of theological ethics. Even if we conceive of the moral life

⁵⁰ Ibid., 339.

⁵¹ Ibid., Volume 2, 298.

⁵² Ibid., Volume 1, 342.

⁵³ Ibid., Volume 2, 13.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 16.

as vitally concerned with the salvation of persons, and therefore to a certain degree anthropocentric, theocentric ethics reminds us of the fundamental truth that God is the ultimate referent for any ethics. Second, in its embrace of the theological importance of history, circumstance and particular events, theocentric ethics promotes the idea that human interactions, one with an "other," seen in the light of religious belief, are by analogy expressions of our interactions with "the Other." That is, human interactions have theological significance beyond themselves.

Theocentric ethics confirms that participative discernment propelled by religious belief affords the moral agent more than merely a prudential course of action; it is itself a way of responding to "a prior reality,"⁵⁵ the reality of God. It is not clear, however, what difference the non-personal God of theocentric ethics makes in the quality of the discernment.

Christ and the Moral Life

Beyond a general articulation of the influence of religious belief on the moral life, Gustafson addresses the specific issue of the influence of Jesus Christ on the moral lives of Christian believers. Because our project concerns moral discernment in the Christian tradition, we may look to Gustafson as an important source of insight in determining the role of Jesus in shaping the morality and the

⁵⁵ Ibid., 13.

discernment of those who believe in him. While it would be fair to say that Gustafson has undergone a rather significant evolution in his thought on this subject, an evolution which has recently put him at odds with other Christian ethicists,⁵⁶ it is likewise fair to say that his studies and proposals of the role of Christ in the moral life have been widely regarded as comprehensive and incisive. As I have noted above in my introductory remarks, Gustafson's writing is characterized by a breadth and balance which is grounded in a method of surveying a number of theoretical options and then offering his own theory as a middle course which does justice to the other options.

Gustafson's study of the role of Christ in the moral life, Christ and the Moral Life, which is his primary statement on this issue, is a good example of this procedure. In order to appreciate Gustafson's own theory of the influence of Christ on the moral lives of believers, and in deference to his thorough consideration of the other Christian theologians' ideas on the topic, I will briefly examine his model and examples in the book and then relate his own answer to the moral question posed to the believer, "What ought I do?" I will then turn my attention to a discussion of the implied christology in Gustafson's works.

Gustafson sees Christian theologians pursuing the above question, "What ought I do?" in the name of all Christian

⁵⁶ See the discussion below in Section III, "A Critical Review of James Gustafson's Work."

believers. "Belief" is a difficult term to explicate; those who assent to belief in Jesus ultimately articulate their allegiance in different forms. Gustafson recognizes this divergence, and formulates a model of headings under which these approaches to belief in Christ and their representative theologians may be discussed.

The first of these methodological approaches, "Jesus Christ, Lord Who is Creator and Redeemer," is represented by neo-orthodox, or "command-of-God" theologians such as Karl Barth. In this formulation, the answer to the questions "What ought I do?" is, according to Gustafson, to "bear witness in your action to what has already been done. Walk in the light..."⁵⁷ The injunction to the believer is to live according to the reality of what God has done in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. A "high" christology of the first order, this conception has Jesus assume a certain central significance as the once-for-all, distinctive manifestation of God's redemption of the world. Consistent with Gustafson's later theocentric ethics, the locus of attention in this scheme is God, not the moral life of humanity. Nonetheless, a moral task is prescribed: "to restore life to that which exists underneath it."⁵⁸ Also akin to the perspective of theocentric ethics, this approach to the normative influence of Christ provides no specific

⁵⁷ James M. Gustafson, Christ and the Moral Life (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 12.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 50.

courses of action, but instead a context in which to consider the moral life: One judges one's action according to the degree to which it witnesses to faith in the already-established objective salvation achieved by Jesus.

According to the second heading, "Christ the Sanctifier," belief in Christ affects the moral life by transforming the moral selfhood and the "moral psychology" of the believing agent. Represented by theologians such as Wesley, Schleiermacher, Augustine and Aquinas, this conception is much more human-centered, with central attention given to the perfection of persons by conversion through the grace of Christ. As such "ethics becomes the analysis of the individual agent's dispositions, motives, intentions, purposes and desires."⁵⁹

"Jesus Christ the Justifier," an approach classically represented by Luther and more recently by Bultmann and Reinhold Niebuhr, attends more to the freedom of the moral agent than his or her transformation and sanctification. This freedom is qualified by each particular theologian, but it does include freedom to love (Luther), freedom to face the future (Bultmann) and freedom to face moral issues on their own terms (Niebuhr).⁶⁰ So, the agent participates in the conviction that Jesus has won salvation for all, but is not guided by particular normative assertions in leading the moral life.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 83.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 116.

By the conception "Christ the Pattern," the moral agent follows Jesus as a moral example of: the form of obedience to God, the relationship one can and ought to have with God, and the revelation of the action of God in the world.⁶¹ This ethics of Christian discipleship is represented by Bonhoeffer, Kirkegaard, and Thomas a Kempis. More christocentric than the command-of-God and justification approaches, it nonetheless shares their lack of particular normative guides.

In outlining the "Christ as Teacher" approach of theologians to the moral life, it is important to note that although normative teachings are obviously given highest priority as sources by theologians such as Bultmann, Rauschenbusch and Ramsey, that which is derived from Christ's teaching is a wide range of moral influences, including attitude, direction, ideal, and norm for decision-making.⁶²

Presuming the above typologies and their respective contributions in answering the question, "What ought I do?" Gustafson himself constructs a proposal. He prefaces and qualifies his proposal by examining the difference which Christ makes in the moral lives of Christian believers, stating that he will address his remarks to the differences

⁶¹ Ibid., 153.

⁶² See the discussion in Ibid., 195-233.

which Christ often does make, can make and ought to make⁶³ in the lives of his followers and their communities.

First, Christ makes a difference in the perspective and posture of the Christian. Through Jesus, one can see the possibility, the hope, the power of goodness, and one can then come to trust God.⁶⁴ This trust permeates the perspective of the moral agent and allows him or her to act with confidence in the face of opposition.

Christ also makes a difference in the disposition(s) -- the manner of life, habits, virtues and "readiness to act in a certain way" -- of the believer.⁶⁵ How this differs from the perspective and posture is not altogether clear, except that there is the suggestion by Gustafson that these are enduring qualities in the life of the agent, rather than passing points of view.⁶⁶

Third, Christ informs the intentions of the disciple. This has to do with the future-orientation of the moral life of the agent, and the basic task is to determine which of the intentions of the agent are consistent with faith in Christ.⁶⁷ "Faith" is a broad term here, presumed to contain many elements of the above discussions, but the most

⁶³ Ibid., 240.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 243-247.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 248-249.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 248.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 261.

important feature of this influence is that Christ should provide a reference for future moral action.

Finally, Gustafson sees that Jesus Christ makes a difference in the believing moral agent in that Christ provides actual norms for behavior. For Gustafson, this means that Christ shows and symbolizes what God wills, that he shows what trust in God can do, and that Christ can provide particular norms for one's words and deeds.⁶⁸ Lest this be interpreted too literally, Gustafson is quick to point out that Christ cannot be the only norm for Christian action and that the believer must incorporate Christ "creatively" -- for example, analogically, by parable and by reference to the love command.⁶⁹

In Gustafson's explanation of the difference which Christ makes to the Christian believer in norms for the moral life, he mentions that in this regard Christ serves as a "source of illumination."⁷⁰ I would submit that in all of Gustafson's constructive proposal, Christ serves much the same moral "function." In all cases -- whether Christ affects perspective and posture, dispositions, intentions or norms for behavior -- Christ principally reveals God in these different aspects of morality and thereby evokes or educes a difference in the moral life of the believing agent.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 265.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 268-269.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 266.

In none of the facets of Gustafson's proposal is there any evidence of Christ's divine power or authority per se in the moral life of the individual. While not denying the divinity of Christ, he certainly does not stress it. In this, he parts company with the approaches of those moral theologians who see in Jesus himself the entitative authority and power of God -- to actually rule the world as its Lord, to sanctify the individual, to justify a fallen creation, to initiate in human history a forthcoming paschal pattern of dying and actually rising, and to promulgate distinctively divine teaching. Those espousing this "higher" christology would promote a different conception of Christ's effect on the moral life.

This christology is borne out in Gustafson's other writings. In delineating the distinctiveness of Christian morality, he states:

What distinguishes the morality of the Christian community is the root and ground of its moral faith, its allegiance to Christ as the One who has come to disclose to all men that the Ground and Giver of life is good...Christian morality is a trust in the goodness and power of God, the creator and orderer and redeemer of life; a goodness made known in the advent, the birth, the words and deeds, the death and new life of Jesus Christ...Apart from belief, apart from assertions that point to God through Jesus his Son, we would not see as clearly as we do that God is worthy of our trust...⁷¹

(The use of upper case -- "One" -- maintains interest on the part of the reader!)

⁷¹ Gustafson, Theology and Christian Ethics, 55-56.
(Emphasis mine)

Gustafson finally makes this ambivalence explicit in his book, Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective. Of interest are two assertions. First, in his efforts to demonstrate the misguided premise of anthropocentric theological ethics, Gustafson states that "The ultimate power is not the guarantor of human benefits; there are many benefits which are ours, but all things simply do not work together for the good of individuals in the human community."⁷² This actually casts doubt as to whether Gustafson's notion of God, who seems somewhat impersonal and disinterested in humanity, is a Christian conception, which would have Jesus Christ understood to be the expression and gift of a God who is vitally involved in human life. Gustafson later "clarifies" the point by admitting his turn from a "central" point of the Christian tradition:

One point at which I have turned from a central aspect of the [Christian] tradition is the displacement of the salvation of persons as the principal point of reference for religious piety ...The warm and friendly deity of a great deal of contemporary piety is displaced; the assurance that regardless of how difficult and tragic human life is, God will make it right, at least for persons who trust in him, is brought under serious questions.⁷³

Finally, Gustafson's makes explicit his decidedly "low" christology. In a retrospective of his position, he states,

The Christian piety that moves and sustains the views developed here is derived more from the narratives and teachings found in the synoptic

⁷² Gustafson, Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective, Volume 1, 99.

⁷³ Ibid., 112.

gospels than it is by the Book of Revelation, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and many themes within the Pauline corpus...[It does not] claim that it does not select⁷⁴ themes from within the gospel account.

Divorced from these texts of "higher" christology, Gustafson's notion of Jesus' role in the moral life is ultimately one of exemplification and illumination:

In relating ourselves and all things in a manner appropriate to their relations to God, Christians [should] be ready voluntarily to deny their own individual and collective interests for the sake of the well-being of other persons, communities and even of the natural world. This obligation is also borne out by general human experience. For Christians, however, this claim is very strong, for in the person and accounts of Jesus, who marks the particular historic identity of this community, there are poignant exemplifications in his life, activity, teaching, and death of what theocentric piety and fidelity call upon us to do.⁷⁵

II. Gustafson's Pastoral Perspective: Church, Ministry and the Moral Life

Given the above elements of Gustafson's formulation of the moral life and the role of religious belief in it -- e.g., the social and interactional nature of morality, including conceptions of response and responsibility; the importance of character formation; and discernment as a key moral action -- one may correctly assume that the Church and its ministers figure prominently in Gustafson's thought. In this second major discussion of Gustafson's thought, we look to Gustafson's theses regarding the pastoral interpretation

⁷⁴ Ibid., 274-275.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 319.

and implementation of his proposal for the Christian moral life.

We noted above that for Gustafson, the moral life is lived interactionally, through agents responding to the initiatives of other agents. We have also established that Gustafson sees in that interaction the possibility of God's communication with humanity, such that the interaction takes on a theological significance beyond itself. For the believing community, the give-and-take of communication is the locus of God's action. This action is not always evident, so that in leading the Christian moral life, believers must discern "what God is enabling and requiring them to do" by collectively attending to the content and meaning of their own interactions, especially as they are illuminated by Jesus Christ. The Church, then, is a "community of moral action," the place where believers "are particularly called to interpret their existence...as the location in time and space of their responsibility to God for human society and for other persons."⁷⁶ The Church takes up the call to be a community in the name of the purposes of God -- creating, sustaining, restraining and making better the quality of life -- in three specific areas: the ethos of the culture in which it finds itself,

⁷⁶ James M. Gustafson, The Church as Moral Decision-Maker (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1970), 71.

the interpersonal relationships within it and the institutions to which it relates.⁷⁷

Gustafson notes that for a church in a pluralistic context such as the church in North America, this mission of ongoing interpretation has particular valence because the church must maintain that interpretation in the face of a number of competing loyalties.⁷⁸ These "loyalties" are meanings which people encounter or create in the forms of relationships and institutions in an effort to make sense of the culture. In "competing" with these pluriform loyalties, the church must maintain its distinctive view, language and message. The church, Gustafson insists, must be a place where the fulfillment of the "deepest human needs" occurs, beyond the "fulfillment of desires" to the fulfillment of responsibilities through ethical reflection.⁷⁹ Gustafson illustrates these assertions with a warning about the present (1970) state of "pastoral" counseling as he sees it in the context of North American Protestantism. Commenting on the wholesale borrowing of therapeutic techniques and the employment of religion as merely a source of benefits for the "client," Gustafson asks rhetorically,

⁷⁷ Ibid., 66-70.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 60-61.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 80.

If the heuristic principles used to understand the plight of the parishoner...are indistinguishable from the principles used by one or another school of psychotherapy, what distinguishes pastoral counseling from any other kind?⁸⁰

On a separate but related topic, Gustafson notes that the nature of church membership in the American context can effect the self-understanding of the church as the community which interprets and enacts its responsibility to God. The Protestant churches no longer follow the Puritan self-understanding of "being gathered out of the body of strangers into the family of saints." Instead they are usually constituted of a group of strangers who "volunteer to join the community of those like themselves, who find something meaningful in life for themselves, their children or their neighborhood."⁸¹ As such, the adherence to the church's distinctive interpretation and enactment of God's call to responsibility will often be strictly voluntary. While Gustafson comments on the Protestant experience in the North American context, much of what he says regarding the voluntary nature of the church may be validated in the contemporary Catholic experience of the North American context with regard to membership and doctrinal allegiance.⁸²

⁸⁰ Gustafson, Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective, Volume One, 28.

⁸¹ Gustafson, The Church as Moral Decision-Maker, 110.

⁸² Andrew M. Greeley, The American Catholic: A Social Portrait (New York: Basic Books, 1977). See Chapter 14, pp. 270-274.

Because of pluralism and the voluntary nature of church membership in certain contexts, a given church community will have difficulty in evoking a singular interpretation of the purposes of God. But even in an ideal church, interpretation and enactment of the purposes of God, while well within the purview of the church, are not foisted upon the members without warrant:

The task of the church is not to tell them what they ought to do in specificity, but to enable them to see possibilities of moral value, and pitfalls of temptation in what they are doing and what they can do. The church cannot claim that moral certainty is forthcoming from centering the laymen's personal existence in Jesus Christ; it can claim that there are implications for⁸³ all human action that come from one's faith.

The "enabling of the members to see the possibilities of moral value, and pitfalls of temptation in what they are doing and what they can do" is the object of Gustafson's proposal of the church as a "community of moral discourse," which is "a gathering of people with the explicit intention to survey and critically discuss their personal and social responsibilities in the light of moral convictions about which there is some consensus and to which there is some loyalty."⁸⁴ After alluding to the historical precedent and theological rationale of the congregational "church meeting," in which "[t]here was a reliance upon the power of the Holy Spirit to use the conversations of men in order to come to clarity about what God required them to be and to

⁸³ Ibid., 35-36.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 84.

do," Gustafson moves away from the theological rationale to add a practical rationale for such a conception of the church:

To demythologize such an affirmation, we have simply the commonplace observation that discourse and deliberation between informed and serious men is more likely to lead to action that is fitting and ethically defensible than are other procedures.⁸⁵

What is the role of the minister in a church conceived of as a community of moral discourse? By the very definition of membership in such a community, the minister must be convinced of the value and theological warrant of interaction as the locus for the interpretation of God's call to responsibility. Acknowledging the value and theological warrant for an interactive model of church, an appropriate leadership style will be necessarily collaborative. The ministerial leader of such a church may demonstrate certain expertise in the moral deliberations of the community, but he or she has no corner on the truth in certain facets of the discussion, especially those which have to do with particular practical applications of moral norms:

The interpretation of the norms is one of the media for consensus formation...The points of reference within which the "expert" does his work in part define the acceptability of what he has to say...The authority of the religious expert is not granted by virtue of his knowledge and ordination, and therefore neither quiet assent nor vigorous obedience is forthcoming. The leader becomes a

⁸⁵ Ibid., 91.

person whose function it is to give guidance to a consensus-forming process, in and through which particular judgments (including his own) can be clarified and be brought to bear on the relevant points of action.⁸⁶

The minister, then, is one who is convinced of the intrinsic moral value of participation in discourse aimed at interpreting God's call to responsibility, is able to offer his or her pastoral and theological expertise but can yield in the face of expertise in areas of related concern, and is a leader in consensus-formation in the community. When the community seeks to clarify and specify its moral intentions in line with "the God..who wills the well-being of his creation,"

[s]pecification of intention is not the task of the pastor or ecclesiastical bureaucrat alone; neither of these is sufficient in wisdom and knowledge, and each is too biased to be reliable as the sole source of determination of the particular purposes of the church. Discourse involves mutual probing, each participant with his special skills, his gifts of wisdom, his technical knowledge, his powers of persuasion, enlightening the process toward consensus about what deeds and words are worthy of the gospel, what activities are consonant with the faith, what performances are consistent with and expressive of the beliefs of the church.⁸⁷

The portrait, then, is of a minister who has enough confidence in God's presence in the interaction of the community that all participants in the moral discourse will have a voice.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 130-131.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 154.

III. A Critical Review of Gustafson's Theology

In this section, I will critically review Gustafson's thought related above, attending to elements first of his theological ethics and then of his pastoral and ecclesiological perspective. Although my critique is in service of my overall thesis regarding pastoral moral discernment, in some cases I will provide remarks about more general concerns in Gustafson's work.

In the use of Gustafson in this particular thesis, I think that the foundational form of the moral life as conceived by Gustafson is most congruent with the positions of Haan and Macmurray. Ultimately, Gustafson sees the moral life in interactional terms, as relations between persons, as a matter of actions, responses and initiatives which are read, interpreted and acted upon by agents in relationships with each other and with institutions. Although this hardly constitutes a significant critical judgment in a broader sense, it is important to point out for the purpose of my later constructive statement that it is a responsible use of Gustafson's theory to categorize his theological ethics as interactional in the vein of Haan and Macmurray. As we have seen above, Haan grounds her interactional morality in empirical science, Macmurray in a philosophical anthropology and Gustafson in both moral anthropology and the theological significance of a God who communicates and interacts with persons. Nonetheless, based on both the form and content of the moral life as it is conceived in Gustafson and related

above, we may make the judicious critical assertion that Gustafson is a true interactional moral theorist and, confident that we are not comparing and contrasting mutually exclusive paradigms for the moral life, may therefore proceed with the constructive statement in the next chapter.

At the same time, Gustafson is by comparison somewhat more general in his description of this interactional foundation of the moral life. While he settles for summary statements such as the one in Can Ethics Be Christian? to outline the elements of the "moral dimensions" life, both Haan and Macmurray are more careful in their articulations of moral anthropology. For example, while Gustafson simply asserts the multivalent dimension of moral life,⁸⁸ Haan spent a good portion of her academic career attempting to gain the scientific ground to critique overly rational theories of moral psychology and thus have empirical warrant to make such a statement. Likewise, while Macmurray attends to the etiology of the social nature of the human person, Gustafson simply asserts it.⁸⁹ Again, while Haan resisted any notion of "character" in the moral life, Gustafson merely asserts that it is an unmistakable feature of it.⁹⁰ Differences such as these may add to the eventual dialogue

⁸⁸ See, for example, the discussion on pp. 118-119 in Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective.

⁸⁹ See, for example, the discussion on p. 120 in Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective.

⁹⁰ See Chapter Two, pp. 25-47, of Can Ethics Be Christian?

between these sources, but this methodological criticism is worthy of mention at this point.

Gustafson has a very well formulated and cohesive historical method which binds his theological ethics. From the outset, Gustafson is at home in empirical theology, grounding it and, specifically, his moral theology, in human experience; in an appreciation of past, present and future dimensions of human life; and in human capacity for growth and development. This is, of course, essential to the present project, as it is necessary to establish a foundational ethic which respects the often situational nature of pastoral moral discernment. In my reading of Gustafson, I understand this to be the central grounding of his methodology, with a few exceptions. Stanley Hauerwas has disputed the coherence of this position, stating that Gustafson cannot decide between a naturalistic and historicist approach to method in ethics.⁹¹

One of the most important contributions which Gustafson makes to theological ethics is his extended thesis in Can Ethics Be Christian? regarding "senses of God," a thesis which I hope to incorporate in my constructive efforts later. Indeed, these senses of God as they are articulated above are at the center of Gustafson's notion that while dispositions and affections have an important influence on the moral life in general, in the life of the believer, they

⁹¹ See Stanley Hauerwas, "Time and History in Theological Ethics: The Work of James Gustafson," The Journal of Religious Ethics, (Spring, 1985): 3-21.

are particularly effective in determining the moral stance of the agent. However, Gustafson could point out with more clarity and force that these senses, rich as they are in shaping the moral life, work in two ways. In their original formulation,⁹² they are the senses of a God who is then by extension imitated to provide the religious "reasons" for being moral. In a later articulation,⁹³ these senses are shared by humanity in general and the experience of them can lead a person to God. This is not an insignificant distinction. Not detracting from Gustafson's original intent of showing how belief influences morality, this reversal also shows how morality can lead one analogically to belief in God. Yet in Gustafson's overall work, the former point is heavily stressed while the latter must be carefully mined from his writing. This could be an excellent point of connection between theological and non-theological ethics were Gustafson to explain and expand it.

There are several critical points I wish to make in regard to the later theological ethics of Gustafson, especially his "theocentric ethics" outlined above. First, it seems at least ironic that after Gustafson provides one of his most significant contributions in his theory of the senses of God and their direct effect upon the morally affective life -- dispositions, intentions, motivations --

⁹² See the discussion in Can Ethics Be Christian?, 87-114.

⁹³ See the discussion in Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective, 135-136.

that God is ultimately described in Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective as "the powers that bear down on us and sustain us." Moreover, God is the "divine governance" which requires and enables all of our actions.⁹⁴ The suggestion in senses of dependence, gratitude, repentance, obligation, possibility and direction which accompany belief is that a God who engenders such senses is much more than a relatively impersonal power which bears down upon us. Even if one allows for Gustafson's "preference for the Reformed tradition,"⁹⁵ this seems a bit skewed toward a disinterested God. In his conclusion of Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective, Gustafson reiterates this:

Ethics in the theocentric perspective does not guarantee happiness, though it does not consign us to discontent. It requires consenting to the governance of the powers of God, and joining in those purposes that can be discerned. God does not exist simply for the service of man; man exists for the service of God.⁹⁶

The gap between this seemingly distant God, who would understandably engender fear or awe in the believer's quest to "consent" to God's power, and the God of Gustafson's earlier writing, through whom the believer experiences gratitude and hope, needs further explanation by Gustafson. Daniel Maguire is more pointed in his criticism of Gustafson's "theocentric God:"

⁹⁴ Ibid., 273-274.

⁹⁵ See Ibid., 157-193.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 342.

In no way can this theocentric and not a little eccentric God say: "I have called you friends!" (John 15:15) This God, to whom Gustafson assigns male gender, views us as "instruments" in his service, plans ultimate cosmic extinction for us, and then wants us to glorify and celebrate his grandeur. What's to celebrate?...This God seems to have no more ultimate concern for us than he had for the dinosaurs.⁹⁷

I detect a similar but more subtle shift in Gustafson's thought concerning the role of Jesus in the moral life of the believer. In his concluding constructive statement in Christ and the Moral Life, Gustafson makes some typically measured remarks concerning the role of Jesus in the moral life. His fourfold, detailed recommendation of the ways in which Jesus is incorporated in the moral life of the believer -- perspective, disposition, intention and norm -- reflects the theological criticisms of his previous presentations and leaves the reader with the impression that the content of the moral life can be deeply affected in a number of ways through the person Jesus. Later, in Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective, the role of Jesus is "reduced" to very scant discussions about being the "incarnation of theocentric piety and fidelity," a strange twist whereby Gustafson impersonally identifies Jesus according to his theory. Richard Neuhaus notes the limits of such a christology:

⁹⁷ Daniel C. Maguire, review of James Gustafson, Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective, Volume One, In Commonweal 109 (1982): 408.

Three of 344 pages are devoted to a discussion of the significance of Jesus..."his teachings, ministry, and life are a historical embodiment of what we are to be and to do." It is not clear how a non-personal, non-acting God enables or requires. Nor does such an astringent Christology sustain the "liturgies and preaching [by which] religious communities function to awaken and nourish our religious affectivities." The Jesus described by Gustafson cannot, should not, be worshiped, and without the worship of Jesus a community is, it would seem, only marginally Christian, not to mention Reformed Christian.⁹⁸

According to Gustafson, Jesus, it would seem, can be a source of example to other humans, but, as Lisa Sowle Cahill points out in her critique of Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective, Jesus' relationship to God is ultimately left in question: "...[H]is relation to God [is articulated] in terms of struggle, suffering, doubt and final consent to the inevitable, even when not perceived as human good. No interpretation of the resurrection is adduced as counterpoint or completion."⁹⁹

Although Gustafson's ethics can be criticized on methodological grounds which range over the entire body of his thought, most of the criticism of Gustafson's thought has surfaced recently at his perceived stepping outside of the parameters of Christian theological ethics. As we have seen, this criticism centers on the roles of God and Jesus in the "theocentric" formulation, features of the

⁹⁸ Richard John Neuhaus, review of James Gustafson, Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective, Volume One, In Interpretation 37 (1983): 199.

⁹⁹ Lisa Sowle Cahill, review of James Gustafson, Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective, Volume One, In Theology Today 39 (1982): 206.

formulation which I do not share. It strikes me that Gustafson's late specification of these themes does not necessarily detract from his earlier significant contributions to theological ethics. While I cannot ignore the eventual shape of Gustafson's thought in theological ethics, the reader will find that I accentuate those features which contribute most to the project at hand, namely, the interactional form of morality, the role of the dispositions and affective life in morality, one's senses of God and the morality they engender, and the perception of God's action in the relational discourse of the believing community.

The second area for critical review, Gustafson's pastoral and ecclesiological perspective, discussed above in Section II, is a more practical one which has direct import for the development of our "critical method" for pastoral moral discernment. Obviously, as I will outline in the following section, I am in substantial agreement with Gustafson's notion of the church as a community of moral discourse. However, I would raise four questions regarding Gustafson's model which we would do well to entertain in later stages when we make our constructive proposal for pastoral moral discernment.

First, given the dialogical nature of the church as a community of moral discourse, what is one to make of those who consider themselves members but whose vision is not "open" to the mediation of compromise and discussion? For

example, if one has a "prophetic" or "radical" stance on the living of the Gospel, a stance which calls him or her to particular witness rooted in a singular moral vision, how does he or she relate to a community whose purpose is basically consensual when it comes to determining the shape of the Christian moral life? Is there a place for heroic virtue in the community of moral discourse? Likewise, if the basic style of leadership in the community of moral discourse is that of guidance in forming consensus, is there a place for those whose leadership is more adequately characterized as "charismatic," inspiring imitation rather than moderation? Gustafson maintains admirable confidence in the ability of group-process to produce insight, a confidence which I share and hope to incorporate in this thesis, but one must acknowledge that this model may not support or even admit the often singular moral perspectives of saints, mystics and prophets.

Second, although I have answered some reservations about the use of Gustafson, a Protestant theologian, in the construction of this thesis regarding Catholic moral reflection, the "community of moral discourse," grounded as it seems in American Protestant and congregational ecclesiology, may present a difficulty in its transition to a "Catholic" model for pastoral moral discernment. While I will only make the case that the basic theological conception and dynamics of the community of moral discourse could serve a local Catholic congregation well in the

personal and collective moral discernment of its members, and this may be the modest answer to the difficulty, some critical questions are rightly posed: First, can it adequately deal with a larger unit of discernment, that is, could this model accommodate, for example, the large suburban Catholic parish, especially in collective discernment? Second, can it adequately address a fact of operative ecclesiology in the Roman church, i.e., a magisterial tradition which seeks a universal adherence?

Third, given the widely known thesis of Robert M. Bellah in his book, Habits of the Heart,¹⁰⁰ that secular expressive individualism is coming to serve as the American public moral discourse, can one hold as Gustafson does that there is sufficient interest on the part of allegedly confirmed individualists (even among those who call themselves Christian or Catholic) in developing a consensual moral Christian perspective on general or particular subjects? Given such an environmental ethos, would people rather find their own path through moral difficulty? Again, the question deserves serious attention. For my purposes, I see the community of moral discourse as an antidote to Bellah's description and a creative part of his prescription

¹⁰⁰ Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Steven M. Tipton, Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

for the American context, the recovery of a common moral discourse through our biblical heritage.¹⁰¹

Finally, if the core theological truth which undergirds the community of moral discourse is that God's enabling and requiring action may be discerned in the relationships of the community, does that not presume a certain degree of interest and involvement on God's part, and is that interest and involvement not strongly suspect in the conception of God encountered in Gustafson's theocentric ethics? I would answer "Yes," and for this reason, based upon my own faith and the conviction that we are generally reduced to analogical language in speaking of God, I would be more inclined to employ a God which is anthropomorphically, though not anthropocentrically, "sensed" as a personally-involving Shepherd, Master, King, Father or Source of Love. This God, as I have shown, is one which best serves Gustafson's model of the community of moral discourse and my appropriation of it.

IV. Implications of James Gustafson's Theological Ethics and Pastoral and Ecclesiological Perspectives

As in the previous two chapters, we now turn to examine the implied contributions of James Gustafson's theological ethics for our proposed construction of a foundational ethic and critical method of pastoral moral discernment in the Roman Catholic tradition. A fuller explication will follow

¹⁰¹ See Ibid., pp. 275 ff., "Transforming American Culture."

in Chapter Five. For now, we look to an overview of these implications.

The collected works of theological ethics by James Gustafson affirm some of the basic insights about morality already postulated in the social interactional proposal by Haan and her associates and by John Macmurray. First, as we have noted above, Gustafson is a true interactional moralist. The form of the moral life is the relational life, and the experiences of the relational life proffer the theory for the moral life as well. We again see repeated in Gustafson's general theory of morality that it is constituted by initiatives and responses, actions and interactions. Second, and a result of this primarily interactional perspective, Gustafson sees morality as a social phenomenon. Although this may be evident to even the most uninformed observer of moral theory, this, as with other moralists cited in this thesis, is a direct challenge to the "philosopher king" model of morality, in which isolated, rational deliberation is somehow the substance of moral action, and the solutions to moral problems lie in sheer logic and deduction. Third, because of this, community is once again presented as a critical locus of moral life and development. Fourth, stemming from Gustafson's fundamentally interactional form of morality is the importance of discernment -- "discourse" in Gustafson's terms -- which again confirms the insight first articulated in this thesis by Haan, that dialogue and a sense of moral

balance between those who are discerning is critical to a comprehensive foundational ethic. Fifth, we see affirmed once again in Gustafson's form of the moral life the multi-dimensional nature of morality. As we have noted above, Gustafson states that reflection is a secondary activity derived from experience, and since experience is comprised of rational, affective, intellectual and aesthetic features, morality must likewise have such a constitution. Finally, a key criterion for a moral life is that of action. For Gustafson, persons are agents capable of determining purposes and developing intentions which reach fruition in the exercise of capacities and powers. Again, Gustafson affirms this element of morality asserted by both Haan and Macmurray.

Even prior to our consideration of Gustafson's distinctively theological purchase on the interactional perspective on morality, we can note the implication of it. The net effect is an increase in the confidence of my thesis here regarding the significance of dialogue in pastoral moral discernment. For a moral theologian to endorse and promote the very form of morality as interactional is to bring forward once again our contention that the give-and-take of moral discernment is not at the "pastoral" periphery of ethics, but instead at the center of ethics, including theological ethics.

Beyond the affirmation of previously cited theories of morality, Gustafson advances this form of morality by

introducing a feature not heretofore stressed. For Gustafson, there is a certain undetermined quality of moral interaction, that is, that the self and the other are alterable in unknown ways as a function of moral interaction. There is also a certain determinacy to the interaction which is grounded in the fact that each agent brings to the interaction a constellation of habits and virtues, or at least a personal developmental history, which figures into the outcome. Although Gustafson has not settled on the term for this constellation of stability -- "integrity," "consistency," "style" or "character" -- he nonetheless asserts that this is an element of the moral life. This has an important implication for our theory. Up until now, we have stated that the foundational ethic and critical method for pastoral moral discernment will have to attend to the generic wholeness of the person, i.e., cognitive as well as affective dimensions, for example. But in this contribution by Gustafson to our comprehensive theory, we note that that which the person brings to the pastoral encounter by way of personal traits will enter into the dialogue and must likewise receive attention. Agents do not approach such a discernment process as blank moral slates, but as persons formed in certain ways which may or may not lend themselves to further formation or to transformation through dialogical discernment.

The most important prospective contribution which James Gustafson makes to the project at hand is that he outlines

the role of religious belief in moral agency. Because our proposal is one for theological ethics and the life of the church, we look to Gustafson as the source for assertions which will have implications for these particular areas in the development of a comprehensive foundational ethic and critical method of pastoral moral discernment. Gustafson's theological and pastoral theories demonstrate how religious and Christian belief transform the moral life of the believer and inform our efforts in this thesis.

The primary implication of Gustafson's theology for our thesis is that in this consideration of theological as well as psychological and philosophical foundations for pastoral moral discernment, we are able to broaden the horizon of the meaning of moral activity. By attending to Gustafson's principal point in his "theocentric ethics," for example, we encounter another perspective from which to approach moral activity. In "relating to others in their proper relation to God," we find a critical meta-ethic for interactional morality which is not afforded by either the centerpiece of our theory, Haan's proposal, or by Macmurray's moral philosophy. Although I have demonstrated the value and warrant of psychology as a source for determining a foundational ethic and critical method for pastoral moral discernment, in this project which seeks to serve the life of the Christian it is hoped that belief and theology will have important complementary and modifying insights, including those "reasons of the mind and heart," as

Gustafson calls them, which serve as reasons to be moral for the Christian believer.

By Gustafson's theology, a new significance is attached to interaction. As we have seen, Gustafson asserts that in the interactions, dialogues and discourses of any collective of believers, we find the possibility of God's communication and action. This is a new, theological, ground for a phenomenon which we have already established as moral. The important implication of this for pastoral moral discernment is that the dialogue between the minister and the one seeking assistance in discernment is hereby designated not only as a sound means of determining moral action but also as an occasion for the development and the transformation of one's faith in a living God.

Gustafson has also shown that belief in God can be a locus of morality. According to Gustafson, a believing agent's "senses of God" -- dependence, gratitude, repentance, obligation, possibility and direction, for example -- engender in the agent imitational dispositions which can be the actual root of moral development and action. In addition to the theological significance of the form of interaction as a foundational ethic for pastoral moral discernment, we have in this feature of Gustafson's theory a theological content for morality as well. It would seem that this has direct implications especially for determining a method for discernment. For example, the minister would do well to come to an understanding of the

governing images and senses of God in the person seeking assistance with moral discernment. Such an understanding would assist the minister in exploring and nurturing the faith-based virtues of the person which may help in determining and enacting his or her course of moral action. It is important to note that these senses and images are more of the realm of the aesthetic and emotional life of the person than of the strictly rational. For this reason as well as others stated in past chapters, the minister does well to attend to the emotional well-being of the one seeking assistance with moral discernment; the affective dimension contains not only moral but religious sentiments which are important to the process of discernment.

Gustafson's constructive proposal for the role of belief in Christ in the moral life is, I think, a very helpful one for our project. Influenced by the best of the theological proposals which he outlines in Christ and the Moral Life, Gustafson suggests that Christ has influence on perspective and posture, disposition and intentions of the believer, and he may likewise serve as a norm for Christian believers. In this theologically nuanced position, Gustafson notes that discipleship may be the key moral category for believers to consider in determining the role of Christ in moral discernment and action. Obviously, Gustafson shies away from a theologically uncritical allegiance to Christ based, for example, on a literal or fundamentalist interpretation of scripture. As such, he

formulates a proposal in which Christ has moral influence on the life of the believer in what seems only broad and relatively undefined ways -- "perspective and posture" being excellent examples. Be that as it may, this conception of the role of Christ in the moral life is particularly suitable for inclusion in pastoral moral discernment. It is rare that in matters of real moral discernment, in which there are no specific answers to particular questions or predicaments, that Christian tradition or scripture in and of themselves can provide a clear answer which has direct application to the issue at hand. More often it is the case that Christian tradition and scripture -- the ongoing message of Christ -- influence the discerning agent through the more general avenues which Gustafson describes. These are helpful parameters for the inclusion of the role of Christ in pastoral moral discernment.

Finally, Gustafson makes explicit recommendations regarding the role of the minister in moral discernment. As I have noted above, there are some ecclesiological difficulties in making the transition from the ideal "community of moral discourse" to the typical Roman Catholic congregation. Nonetheless, I think that the basic model of the role of the minister as articulated by Gustafson in The Church as a Moral Decision-Maker draws together other observations which I have made about the role of the minister in pastoral moral discernment, and it could well serve as a guide for the minister in the "critical method"

for pastoral moral discernment which we will construct in our last chapter. Gustafson sees the minister functioning in moral discernment as a guide for consensus-formation, as an active participant in moral discourse who has an expertise which he or she must share, but who has enough confidence in the possibility of God's presence in the interactions of a community of belief that he or she can yield to the positions of others in the dialogue. This, of course, runs directly counter to the more didactic and authoritarian model of pastoral moral discernment which holds in many Catholic congregations, as I have contended in the introduction of this thesis.¹⁰² Given our aim of constructing an interactive alternative in this thesis, Gustafson's participative, dialogical role for the minister in moral discernment is a valuable formulation for the construction of a critical method for pastoral moral discernment in the Roman Catholic tradition.

Having completed our examination, critiques and implications of the elements of the interactional theories

¹⁰² In minimizing the hierarchical role, Gustafson parallels Avery Dulles' ecclesiological type of "servant," which stresses the ministerial empowerment of all the baptized, as well as the "mystical communion" type, which stresses the communal aspects of the church. (See Avery Dulles, Models of the Church (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1974), especially pp. 43-57 and 83-96. As will become more evident in ensuing chapters, I favor these types for the purpose at hand. Both types carry attendant criticisms, to which my thesis would likewise be subject. Nonetheless, I believe they promise to contribute much in prescribing contemporary pastoral responsibilities, notably an ethic and method for pastoral moral discernment.

of morality of Norma Haan and her associates, John Macmurray and James Gustafson, we are now ready to conduct a conversation among these sources and to construct a foundational ethic and critical method for pastoral moral discernment in the Roman Catholic tradition.

CHAPTER 5

A CONVERSATION AMONG THE INTERACTIONAL THEORIES: TOWARD A FOUNDATIONAL ETHIC FOR PASTORAL MORAL DISCERNMENT

In the last three chapters, we have laid the groundwork for the initial construction of a foundational ethic and a critical method for Roman Catholic pastoral moral discernment. In the conclusions to these chapters, we have suggested the possibility that these theories of moral agency and action may together lead to a comprehensive ethic from which a method of moral discernment may be derived and to which it might answer.

We began in Chapter Two with a consideration of the social-interactionist theory of moral development and action of Norma Haan. As we have noted previously, Haan's theory is to serve as the empirical centerpiece of the proposed foundational ethic. We do this advisedly, having established the warrants for such a move in Chapter One. With the support of traditional Catholic ethical thought in both natural law and the magisterium, we look to interactionist moral psychology for basic insights upon which we will build our comprehensive ethic.

The point of departure for Haan and her associates is the question, "What is morality?" This is a different, prior question than the guiding inquiry of those in moral

philosophy and theology, who, according to Haan, form their theories as answers to the question, "Why be moral?" Haan's empirical purchase on the moral life has its limits; the claims it can make are circumscribed. Specifically, Haan's thesis can only offer "thin assumptions of value," empirical assertions which describe the basic form of the moral life, the conditional parameters within which persons develop and act as moral agents.

Even with these limits, the findings are valuable to any study of the moral life. They are an especially welcome element in the efforts of recent Catholic moral theology, which increasingly relies upon four sources -- scripture, Church tradition, normative philosophy and experience (and the systematic articulation of experience in the empirical sciences) -- for its ethical grounding. While tradition and normative philosophy have dominated Catholic theology of the moral life for centuries, and Scripture has begun to come into its own in the last half-century, empirical science has yet to make significant contributions as a source for Catholic ethical thought. The work of Haan, Aerts and Cooper offers the prospect of doing so.

In an effort to make critical use of Haan's social-interactional proposal for morality for my particular purposes, I have introduced the theories of two other moral interactionists, philosopher John Macmurray and theologian James Gustafson. By doing so, I begin to address the limitations of "thin assumptions of value" and in the

process develop a foundational ethic for Catholic pastoral moral discernment which enjoys the comprehensive bases of psychology, philosophy and theology.

As we have seen in Chapter Three, in his "form of the personal," Macmurray articulates an important shift in a philosophical appropriation of the moral life.

Distinguishing himself from both his predecessors and contemporaries, Macmurray formulates a relational moral anthropology which casts new light on many features of the moral life, including the criteria for moral action, the sources of moral motivation, and the possibilities of a theistic universe in which there is a "path to God through human experience." In his full exposition of the moral life, we encounter normative, "thick" assumptions of value which are congruent with Haan's theories, but which complement her psychological perspective in important ways.

Likewise, we look to Gustafson in the construction of our foundational ethic as another moralist who, like Haan, sees in the dynamics of human interaction the form of the moral life. But unlike Haan, Gustafson centers the moral life on God and the formation of our moral character in our senses of God; he states not only the basic form of the moral life, but also the theological import of human relationships and interactions. With Macmurray, then, Gustafson roots his assertions in normative assumptions about the human person. As this is ultimately a proposal having direct implications for moral theology and pastoral

practice, we look to Gustafson's "empirical" theology for central claims which affirm and reinforce the interactional perspective on the moral life, and which help to focus the important contributions of Haan's social interactional proposal. Moreover, in the final chapter, we will again look to Gustafson for cues regarding the incorporation of the interactional perspective in the development of a method for pastoral moral discernment.

In this chapter, I will relate the theories of the three interactional moralists to each other in an effort to precipitate a relational foundational ethic for the Christian moral life. In the process, I hope to demonstrate that insights about moral agency and action from the social interactional proposal of Norma Haan and her associates might be effectively incorporated into Christian ethics. The development of a relational ethic is particularly germane to the project at hand, as such an ethic allows for the articulation of formal values which might serve as guidelines for the interaction which I have defined above as "pastoral moral discernment," especially in the Catholic tradition, which currently suffers a lacuna in its theory about pastoral translation of moral teachings.

In the theories of the three social interactionists presented above, I detect common thematic features of a comprehensive relational ethic. For the purposes of this chapter, I will concentrate on five major features under which I will subsume the conversations between Haan,

Macmurray and Gustafson: the role of historical method in establishing the ethic; a multidimensional moral anthropology; the use of subjective imagination and creativity in forging solutions to moral problems; the social, relational and communal nature of morality; and the role of belief in God and Jesus Christ in moral agency and action. Following the "conversations" of the theorists according to these themes, I will formulate statements which I hope adequately synthesize the content of the conversations. These statements will provide the actual elements of a foundational Christian ethic which would guide pastoral moral discernment in the Roman Catholic tradition and offer the contours of a critical method for that discernment.

I. An Ethic Grounded in History

In Chapter One, we noted that the admission of history as a basis for a Christian ethic is perhaps the most important and comprehensive methodological shift in Catholic moral theology in recent time. Because Catholic moral thought has been largely synonymous with a non-historical interpretation of the natural law tradition, moral "reflection" has been dominated by a systematic application of unchanging moral principles to virtually all of life's contingencies.

This, of course, has had massive implications, including a minimizing of the role of the individual person in decision-making, a downplaying of the "subjective"

element in discernment, and a deep, paralyzing conservatism by which particular contexts and situations have been dismissed as mere accidents in an otherwise pre-determined plan for the cosmos which yielded a clearly articulated objective moral order to which all people must submit. In short, time has been merely the medium through which the objective order played itself out; because "change" and "development" have been only accidental, they have assumed little importance as moral categories and have required no interpretation beyond their accidental status.

With the admission of history as a base upon which Christian ethics is built, the human experiences of change and development assume a significance which has been heretofore unacknowledged. Time has become the ongoing chronicle of God's salvation of humanity, and therefore discrete events are not accidents but expressive of the substance of God's gratuitous love. As such, individual events in time require interpretation as parts of a whole -- the unfolding of God's creative plan, in which persons are not cogs in a well-oiled machine, but agents of change and development who are co-creators and whose experiences are worthy gauges of the ways in which God acts.

How do Haan, Macmurray and Gustafson contribute to this changing conception of the role of history in the methodological grounding of Christian ethics? As we might expect, those who begin with the assumption of value in the

experiences of human interaction in their manifold forms will have much to contribute to the discussion.

As we have fully explicated in Chapter Two, Haan's notion of moral development and action is conceived in the experiences of everyday life. Morality for Haan is not a speculative matter, but a practical, experiential one. That is, by attending to the ways in which we actually seek and achieve moral balances in our everyday lives, we can come to know the answer to the question, "What is morality?" Because for Haan morality is constituted in both the process and the outcome of a dialogical interchange, that is, by action and interaction, we can note with assurance that action in a given circumstance, as she has said, "is regarded, in everyday life, as the only authentic criterion of moral truth."¹ Action, a pivotal consideration bounded in time by an observable beginning, middle and end, reflects an historical consciousness in Haan's theory of morality.

Moreover, one accrues skills in the course of new and repeated actions and situations, and this, Haan asserts, is moral development. In even proposing the idea of the moral development of the person, Haan accedes to the concept of change in the moral order. To further explicitate personal moral development as the precipitate of adequate social skills accumulated in particular concrete situations, as Haan does, is to declare an allegiance to the idea that

¹ Haan, "An Interactional Morality of Everyday Life," in Social Science As Moral Inquiry, 230-231.

history is the base of morality. As we noted above, Haan may even be criticized for her rather radically situational conception of morality. Joining the social learning theorists of morality, she is most skeptical of the notion of "character," or some fixed constellation of moral qualities in the agent which perdures over time and through particular circumstances.

All of this points to Haan's unmistakable grounding of morality in time and experience. As an empiricist, she has pointed to the exigencies and dynamics of everyday living in order to yield a theory of morality. Indeed, it would be difficult to conceive of an empirical theory of morality which was not grounded in the actual, the observable, the concrete, and ultimately, the historical. This is precisely one reason why Haan can serve as the cornerstone of our foundational ethic. As Catholic moral theology moves away from what has come to be called the "classicist worldview" to an "historicist worldview," that is, toward an appreciation of action, situation and praxis as determinants of morality, empiricists such as Haan stand to offer much to an adequate understanding of a particular phenomenon such as pastoral moral discernment, as well as the moral life in general.

Macmurray shares Haan's predisposition for action-in-history as the principal criterion for morality. As we have seen, much of Macmurray's work is devoted to establishing the basic anthropological position of humanity as "I do,"

over and against the predominant strains of Critical Philosophy, in which the position of "I think" is the starting point for moral reflection. As Macmurray seeks to construct a "form of the personal," in which the human relationship is the basis for morality, he sees the "I think" position as overly rationalized, abstract, isolationist, and outside the realm of historical existence. Recall Macmurray's case against the adequacy of the "I think" position:

If we start with the solitary individual, self-isolated in reflection, and consider him existing as a thinker, we do exclude the normal sources of error, and his existence becomes an ideal existence... So we all rise above the sources of error, which lie in the limitation of a spatio-temporal existence and the practical necessities it imposes; above bias and prejudice; above the particularities of circumstance and experience which account for our differences from one another. So we all enter a logical heaven, where there is nothing to sully the pure exercise² of reason, and to think is to think the truth.

While Macmurray shares this practical, action-oriented, historical grounding with Haan, he extends the effect of such a methodological basis by actually introducing the significance of history. Beginning with the assertion of the "I do" position, he states that the history of the world may be conceived of as the intentional action of "agents," rather than accidents occurring to "subjects." If one assents to such a conception, one can also imagine that the

² Macmurray, Persons in Relation, 22.

history of the world is really one action, the intentional action of one Agent, God.³

As we have stated in Chapter Two, such a move is not made facilely, and for a person to "imagine" such a singularly intended "personal universe" is no less than to make an important act of faith. Nonetheless, Macmurray notes that for "religious" persons, the world cannot be seen differently. In faith, the believer sees the universe, constituted in all of its circumstances, eventualities, particularities, limits of time and space, as the "field" of God's personal and intentional action. As such, the field of religious experience is coterminous with everyday experience, history gains significance as the domain of God's purposes, and a human morality which attends to the dynamics of history is valid and true for the believer.

In short, for our purposes, Macmurray's overall thesis regarding the significance of history augments and complements Haan's position. Haan appropriately confines her thesis to the purview of empirical science, offering "thin" assumptions of value which recruit wide agreement about the ways in which morality works in history, i.e., everyday settings. While believers stand to learn much from studying the parameters of actual moral functioning and development, Macmurray grants a specifically articulated significance to the everyday interactions which are morality for Haan. Through Macmurray's work, we come to see that the

³ Macmurray, The Self As Agent, 217.

particular situations of people in history and the conversations, the dialogues, and the interactional behavior which those situations engender have an even deeper significance than the usefulness of a "true" theory of morality; by lending normative meaning to Haan's findings, we may also have an historically-based "best" theory of morality.

Gustafson gives us additional normative impetus to attend to the exigencies of human history. As we have stated above, Gustafson is "theologically empirical" in his method in ethics. He begins with human experience and proceeds to interpret it and draw normative assumptions from it. Like both Haan and Macmurray, Gustafson sees the moral life as culminating in action. Again, this is an indicator that persons are agents capable of intentional action, not merely subjects of the forms of a static universe; and this in turn signals an importance for history and the individual events of which it is comprised:

As agents, they have the capacities to determine themselves to some extent; they can intend to exercise their capacities in certain ways and can follow through on such intention ... Persons are not merely passive chips floating on rivers of events and circumstances and carried by whatever⁴ currents flow. Rather, they are agents or actors.

Instead of basing belief in God on the postulation of a single Agent with a single, personal intention for the universe, as Macmurray does, Gustafson asserts that a person can come to belief through analogically extrapolating on

⁴ Gustafson, Can Ethics Be Christian?, 12.

experiences with an other such that an Other is discovered.⁵ Gustafson nonetheless asserts the importance of history and an historically-based ethic by noting that the believer detects in everyday experiences more than just the vicissitudes of human interactions. A believer looks to the particularities of events and interactions because God is present in history, not revealing a changeless world order to which all must conform, but an ever-new action and requirement:

[T]he horizon of [the believer's] vision, both of his responsibilities and of his aspirations, extends beyond the time and space box in which he fixes his moral action for reasons of practical necessity to a power which renders new possibilities and new hopes. His involved discernment is not only in finding which is right and good in the circumstances in which he acts, but in seeking what God is requiring and making possible.⁶

Later, we will examine the ways in which Gustafson centers and focuses our foundational ethic on God's requiring and enabling. For now, it is important to point out only that Gustafson, like Macmurray, deepens the significance of Haan's proposal by stating that in the case of the believer, one "uses" historical circumstances as grist for the mill of theological reflection, as the very stuff of God's being-in-the-world. That is, an historical event is more than just an event, and as we shall see below, an interaction is more than an interaction. For Haan, the empirical inquiry into

⁵ Gustafson, Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective, 135-136.

⁶ Gustafson, Theology and Christian Ethics, 42.

the nature of everyday morality has its own internal justification: We will discover what morality is from studying "practical" moral action and development. For Gustafson, the findings of that study may reveal more than just knowledge about morality; they may reveal "responsibilities and aspirations which extend beyond the time and space box in which [the believer] fixes his moral action for reasons of practical necessity to a power which renders new possibilities and new hopes." The world of events, circumstances and interactions -- the world of human history -- is not only interesting but theologically meaningful.

In forming a synthesis of the perspectives of the three interactionists on the role of history and historical method in establishing our foundational ethic, we can state the following: The ethic is based upon the phenomena of changing human experiences and the articulation of them as discrete historical events which we may interpret and to which we attach theological significance.

II. A Multivalent Moral Anthropology

With our ethic thus rooted in history and a developmental methodology, we have come to see the importance of practical actions determined and performed by responsible agents in a time and space which have significance beyond themselves. While we have examined the three interactionists' theories of time, change, and development, we do well to relate their moral

anthropologies. As the attention turns to moral agency, we will want to compare the views of the human person and how the constitutive elements of the person effect moral decision-making, action and development. For each of the interactional theorists, we will look at the fundamental view of the human person, the perspectives on moral motivation, the roles of personal cognition and affectivity in the moral life, and how "character" is incorporated into the three moral anthropologies.

Haan's interactional proposal is founded upon a positive view of humanity, that is, a very optimistic perspective on the capacity of the human person to be good and do the right thing in conjunction with others. Unlike the psychoanalytic perspective, for example, which articulates the moral life as the mediation in the ego of basically selfish impulses toward pleasure, and the social learning perspective, which stresses virtual value neutrality in the earliest stages of life, Haan proposes that the newborn is "morally naive, but immediately induced to participate reciprocally." Unlike the Freudian conception, in which the unsuccessful resolution of the Oedipal complex results in a fairly determined (and somewhat mysterious) deficiency in moral functioning for the duration of one's life, Haan sees moral development as dependent upon the quality of social interchange and the successful resolution of actual situations in which one is called to draw upon dialogical skills which one has accrued over time.

The positive implication of Haan's view is that mistakes in moral judgment and even performance may be committed and assimilated for the agent's further reference, but these defaults are not indicative of a fundamental egocentricity or value neutrality. The impulse toward reciprocity, cooperation and equalization with others endures.

Haan, then, avers a "natural" reciprocity which serves as a motivational factor in moral decision-making and action. There are both positive and negative motivations which flow from this basic desire for reciprocity:

Moral motivation has both a negative and positive thrust; the human network of interdependency makes it so. Its negative push is the threat of disrupted relationships; its positive pull is toward enhanced relationships.⁷

If this seems an inordinately simple explanation for moral motivation, Haan adds that "people commit themselves to this moral interdependency for more private motivations:"

They have compelling needs to regard themselves as moral; they need to participate in order to protect their legitimate self-interests; and⁸ they want to live in a morally predictable world.

So personal moral motivation according to Haan's proposal is a composite of genuine, strong and natural impulses toward reciprocity and more "private" motivations of personal image, protection of self-interests and the comfort of a morally predictable world.

⁷ Haan, On Moral Grounds: The Search for Practical Morality, 348.

⁸ Ibid., 349.

These "private" motivations, while admissible as positive motivations in moral dialogue and the forging of a moral balance, can also be undermining to the dialogue, as is witnessed by Haan's extended thesis of "coping and defending," a study of how agents enter or block dialogue, depending on their motivation either to reach equalization between parties or positions, or fearfully to defend their own individual welfare in the forms of image, self-interest, or predictability.

The roles of such fear and defensiveness, as well as the personal affective satisfaction of actually reaching a balanced and apt solution to a given moral problem suggest a critical part is played by emotions in the moral life according to the interactional proposal:

The words for the reactions that follow the obstruction of moral motivations are all emotion words: outrage, indignation, disgrace, shame, umbrage, taken-in, cheated, belittled, ripped-off, and so forth. And they follow not just the obstruction of moral motivation; even the threat of obstruction is sufficient. On the other side of the coin, consummation of people's moral motivations produces the glow of the good conscience and in groups, a sense of well-being and camaraderie that their moral viability is affirmed. Thus, it seems moral action must be explained in terms of emotion as well as cognition.⁹

The interactional experiments yielded important findings regarding the notion of "character," or a relatively fixed constellation of moral qualities of the person which transcend the demands of a specific situation.

⁹ Ibid., 349-350.

Haan's extensive research tends to show that participants in the experiments who tested at a certain level in Kohlberg's scheme¹⁰ did not maintain a characteristic moral functioning in the interactive situations,¹¹ but only in very restricted settings:

[The] results suggest that some consistency in moral character occurs when situations are similar, dilemmas are hypothetical, and interpersonal relations are equitable. Real life seldom provides such a series of bland moral dilemmas.¹²

For Haan, as we have seen above, persons may exhibit characteristic ways of facing moral dilemmas, either characteristic ways of coping or of defending themselves in moral dilemmas, but even these are situationally relative, in that different coping and defending ego processes are employed by the person according to such situational factors as the emotional distance of the person from the proposed situation and whether the group process of discernment was led or dominated. Prescinding from some allowance for these "characteristic" ways of functioning, though, the interactional proposal for morality seems largely to negate the rather common wisdom that moral agency is a matter of

¹⁰ It is important to point out that Haan and her associates set out to test the cognitive proposal of Kohlberg, who asserted an irreversible invariant sequence of stages of moral development which would each constitute a certain kind of "character." Haan's findings are offered in relation to the adequacy of Kohlberg's stage-as-character concept. We will return to a theological discussion of character in Chapter Six.

¹¹ See Haan, On Moral Grounds..., 150-151.

¹² Ibid., 151.

drawing upon fixed qualities in the person. Instead, the moral anthropology of the interactional proposal is suggestive of a person with a whole range of practiced dialogical skills which are employed in creative, inductive ways in response to the demands of a situation. And this is the only real finding of characteristic behavior for Haan: that in a significant number of cases, this general dialogical mode was the preferred and cherished mode of problem-solving when situations were optimal and participants could "cope."¹³

But it is well worth noting that outside of testing participants for their assigned level in Kohlberg's scheme and having scorers and other participants evaluate some personality traits of the subjects in the experiments, Haan and her associates did not set out to test a traditional notion of "character" beyond that provided by Kohlberg. Also, the interactional experiments stand to be criticized in the selection of college students as the oldest of the participants. For example, in Erikson's scheme, the most prominent of the character formation theories, often a moral identity will not have been crystallized by the age of the common undergraduate student.

Macmurray's articulation of the human condition, the fruit of philosophical reflection and not empirical testing, is, however, very much akin to Haan's. As an empiricist, Haan is disinclined to use the terms "nature" or "natural"

¹³ Ibid., 214.

in her description of the human condition; Macmurray, while consciously moving away from a natural law tradition in his work, alludes nonetheless to a very positive "nature" of humans in his theory of morality. As we have noted, for Macmurray, everything has a nature, and when a given thing or persons expresses its nature in action, it is free. Without entering the thicket of actually describing a human nature, Macmurray does describe what human freedom is: the freedom to apprehend and enjoy a world outside ourselves and live in communion with others who do the same.¹⁴ Again, while Macmurray does not state this as a basic condition of human life, the suggestion is clear that this positive freedom to apprehend and enjoy a world outside ourselves in company with others is by design human. Macmurray's basic view of humanity is hopeful, and his morality reflects that.

Based upon her own observation and testing, Haan describes a fundamental reciprocity in the person, and this forms an important element in her positive view of humanity as well as her formulation of moral motivation in the person. Macmurray seems to consult psychology of some kind to make an identical claim in his "Mother and Child" thesis, but no mention of a psychology is made. Instead, as with any philosophical anthropology, to substantiate the claim we have only Macmurray's clear thinking and good word that this is the way things are. His methodological limits notwithstanding, Macmurray's basic theory of moral

¹⁴ Macmurray, Freedom in the Modern World, 170-175.

motivation is that it is the result of the resolution or lack of resolution of the conflict resulting in the child from the inevitable withdrawal of constant care and attention of the mother in early childhood. As we have seen above, successful resolution results in an interdependence, a genuine love for the mother, which endures for the rest of life as the basis of intentions for action and thus moral motivation. Aborted resolution of the conflict leads to a fear-based extortion of affection, or pseudo-love, from the mother, either by passive "fleeing," or by aggressive "fighting." In short, genuinely interdependent love and defensive fears of isolation are the two basic motives for action. The former engenders moral action; the latter obstructs moral action.

Regardless of the disparity in how Macmurray and Haan arrive at their congruent positions regarding both the basic view of the human condition and the basis for moral motivation, the similarities are striking: There is in both a "natural" reciprocity in the human person which tends toward communion with others and away from the disruption of relationships. Additionally, for Haan there are the "private" motivations by which one can maintain a view of the self as moral, protect self-interest and gain comfort in a predictable moral universe. While Macmurray does not assert such additional motivations, he does share with Haan a theoretical eventuality which occurs when the self and its needs are not regarded: defensiveness rooted in fear which

undermines moral action. For Macmurray, this defensiveness is played out in fleeing or fighting. Haan specifies the defensiveness as the "defending" forms of the ego processes which are "coping" mechanisms for establishing real moral balances of reciprocity. Again, in short, reciprocal, heterocentric love and isolationist, egocentric fear are the positive and negative motivations for morality.

Also like Haan, Macmurray admits a central role for the emotions in the moral life. But while Haan's theory of the role of emotions in moral decision-making and action revolves around her coping and defending thesis, Macmurray's thesis regarding the emotions is borne out of the moral anthropology above, described by Macmurray as the "I and You" position. The "I and You" position is Macmurray's corrective to the "I think" position, the position which acclaims rationalistic and individualistic thought as the locus of moral life. The "I think" position is that of Macmurray's contemporaries in Critical Philosophy, and for Macmurray, it is the "solipsism of theoretical thinking." This "I and You" position gives us a window to Macmurray's view of the emotions. As we have seen above, Macmurray makes a case for "emotional reason," a concept which defers to a human capacity for reflection which is both subjective and objective, both valuative and logical. This "emotional reason" would have it that we must place our values in dialogue with others so that we may validate our own perceptions with and against the perceptions of "emotional

reason" of others. But for Macmurray, more than for Haan, who has only made assertions about the role of emotions in moral action, emotions and the non-rational "senses" of things are what give us the capacity to value in the first place. As we noted in Chapter Three, for Macmurray:

Our dilemma lies in the fact that we cannot decide what would be the best to do because we cannot decide what is best worth having. That is a dilemma, not between the heart and the head, but in the heart. What is worthwhile cannot be decided by thinking, by intellect, by science, but only by emotion.¹⁵

Macmurray does have a relatively minor theory of "character," which is related to moral motivation:

...[A]ll action contains necessarily an element of reaction to stimulus, without which it would be impossible. We call this habit; and the system of habits in an individual agent we call character.¹⁶

For Macmurray, habits are not merely organic responses to stimuli, but are learned. And though they are subject to reform and modification and may be complicated by cognition, they are considered actions which have motives.¹⁷ Insofar as they are part of a response to a stimulus which is also intentional, habits are aspects of intentional activity and experience, and thus a part of moral action. Therefore, character as the system of habits present in a person, is invoked as a moral theme principally in looking to one's

¹⁵ Ibid., 55.

¹⁶ Macmurray, The Self As Agent, 196.

¹⁷ Recall that Macmurray makes a distinction between motivation, a long-term moral disposition grounded in the "love and fear" scheme above, and intention, which is the moral impetus for a particular action.

past action and attempting a prediction for the future; but the effect of a variant specific intention which would have one stray from a "character" in a given situation is not discounted:¹⁸

We must not forget, however, that the patterns of feeling which constitute our motives are themselves the product of an intentional experience; and that they continue responses to the environment which have been deliberately established in the past. The impulsive activities of an agent are therefore normally 'in character'; though they are not determined by the present intention. A person's character is the persistent system of motives from which he acts under normal conditions; and when we predict what he is likely to do in given conditions from a knowledge of his character, we abstract from intention, and suppose that his motives will determine his actions.¹⁹

To Haan, for whom "characteristic action" is the only observable and reportable phenomenon, Macmurray's theory, albeit apparently more comprehensive, would probably seem illusory in its claims. But Macmurray's is a helpfully nuanced definition of "character" which takes into account its elusive quality of simultaneously existing as an intentional and unintentional force in the moral life.

With Gustafson's moral theology we have the necessary introduction of God in our consideration of interactional perspectives. Indeed, each of our four categories of study under the theme of moral anthropology -- the fundamental view of humanity, moral motivation, the roles of cognition and affectivity, and "character" -- are transformed in some

¹⁸ See the discussion in The Self As Agent, 194-196.

¹⁹ Ibid., 197-198.

fashion in Gustafson's thought by virtue of a personal belief in God.

While Gustafson does not formulate a distinct and systematic description of his "fundamental view of humanity," several important features of such a view are evident in his work. Clearly, Gustafson sees the form of the moral life as interactional, and one can infer an interactional moral anthropology as well in a work such as Can Ethics Be Christian? Also, Gustafson turned to this broader theme in his Theocentric Ethics, and study of his later work is valuable in this regard. Basic to his view is the contention that all of life is interdependent before God, who is the "power that bears down upon us." Notably, for Gustafson, humans do not enjoy a particularly privileged position in that universe; God does not take special interest or delight in their role in the life of creation. Human persons simply share an interdependence with other creatures which God enables. But Gustafson does make for a definite, though seemingly not "natural," interactional tendency in the human person:

I believe we can say appropriately only that we have capacities to respond to persons and events in an interactive way, and that through those actions we respond to the divine governance, to the powers that bear down on us and sustain us.²⁰

In contrast to Macmurray's interdependence, which is rooted in a personal, particularistic experience of relation

²⁰ Gustafson, Ethics From a Theocentric Perspective, Volume One, 274.

with the mother, Gustafson's notion leaves something to be desired: interdependence is the basic form of human life, but it has no specific personal referent. Remarkably, Gustafson's notion more closely shares Haan's view of humanity as fundamentally reciprocal, cooperative and equalizing, but without a special reference to how such reciprocity came about in humans as such. For Haan, we simply are this way without much explanation. For Macmurray, we are this way, especially because of a significant relationship early in life. For Gustafson, God made us this way, but God made all of creation this way.

Similarly, basic morality will parallel the respective views of humanity. For Haan, morality consists of the actual ways and means of equalizing with other reciprocal beings. For Macmurray, it is the radical human freedom to be heterocentric in company with others. And for Gustafson, the position of the human person is relativized in the larger scheme of things, such that morality, as we have seen, is a matter of relating things to a "prior reality," in a manner appropriate to their relations not to us but to God. Morality, then, becomes "theocentric" and no longer "anthropocentric." As we shall discuss in Section V. of this chapter, this is a significant thematic shift.

Gustafson's theory of moral motivation flows from the basic relational form of the moral life, i.e., that like Haan and Macmurray, motivation comes from the maintenance and enhancement of relationships, moral motivation for the

human person also flows from theocentricity and is understandably rooted beyond the relationships themselves, in God.

While many have noted the apparent discontinuity between Gustafson's earlier and later work, there is some detectable consistency between the view of humanity above and Gustafson's more widely acclaimed theory of the "senses" of God, his basic scheme of moral motivation. As we have seen in Chapter Four, senses of God such as dependence, gratitude, repentance, obligation, possibility and direction are realized in our interactions with others. That is, trading heavily in analogy, Gustafson says that moral motivation lies in the following construct: As we have known God to be for us in a certain way, so we are for others in that same way. What is the consistency? While God is at the center of this conception of moral motivation, we are disposed to act in a certain way. Do the senses of God imply a personal God who has more interest in us than the basic thesis of Theocentric Ethics would suggest? I think so. Prescinding from this, though, we can at least say that there is a consistency in the God-centeredness of moral motivation. This assertion would also hold for Gustafson's other moral motivators -- religious symbols, principles and values. Moreover, as we will discuss later, Christ may be considered a moral motivator in the same light, as a revealer of God-as-the-center-of-value; Christ

"motivates" us by "illuminating" a way of life in which all things are ordered according to their relationship to God.

Finally, in regard to moral motivation, it would seem that while Gustafson does see the importance of relationship, in comparison to Macmurray, he is relatively silent on the moral motivation of love. Likewise, unlike the other two, he does not say much about the negative moral motivation of defensive fear.

It is evident that Gustafson would join Haan and Macmurray in their views that the affective factors play a critical role in the moral life. To locate so much of the moral life in the world of "sense," "disposition," and "interdependence," and "belief," for example, is to suggest that moral action is not the strict domain of rationality, logic and the application of principles. Indeed, because Gustafson's moral theology is "empirical theology," a reflection on experience, we would expect that he admits of the critical role of the emotions:

... [M]orality as an aspect of human experience might not be as neatly divisible into aspects of the person as some moral theorists hold...In morality and religion there are affective as well as cognitive and volitional aspects of experience ... in the rawest moments of moral concern these aspects of the self are commingled.²¹

Like Haan's listing of specific ego processes which assist and hinder moral functioning, Gustafson notes specific dispositions which are morally formational. The difference is that another person is the direct object of

²¹ Ibid., 118-119.

the emotions for Haan, while Gustafson's senses of God involve another person analogically and imaginatively for the purpose of morality. These "senses" are remarkably similar to Macmurray's "senses," which one must cultivate in order to have a kind of valuative reason, or emotional reason. While Macmurray does not center these senses in God, their importance as the locus of evaluating the ends of things is very much on a par with that indicated by Gustafson for his "senses." So while Haan and Macmurray make cases for the significance of emotions with respect to their own methodological consideration of morality, Gustafson, too, incorporates the emotional life as a place of flourishing for religious impulses undergirding the moral life.

Much more than either Haan or Macmurray, Gustafson articulates a strong thesis of moral character. Gustafson does not attempt to settle the important question of whether such a notion can be supported empirically. Haan's answer to such a question is a qualified "No." More like Macmurray, Gustafson theorizes about character in terms of the moral predictability of a given person, based on enduring constellations of traits which sometimes enable and at other times obstruct sound discernment and good moral action. While these do not determine the moral action of a particular agent, Gustafson notes that they are "conditions which make possible and likely certain sorts of actions."²²

²² Gustafson, Can Ethics Be Christian?, 47.

While this is first considered by Gustafson as "consistency," "integrity" or "style," he later makes the stronger claim that character describes "the sort of person one is."²³ This assertion is, of course, central to Gustafson's theological anthropology. For Gustafson, a person is constituted not only by his or her relationships (that which is congruent with the other interactionists), but also by features of his or her personality which are relatively stable, both features over which the agent has control, such as beliefs, dispositions and intentions, as well as uncontrollable features such as genetic endowment or psychiatric illness. Insofar as belief in God, especially, is a part of one's character, that is, one's enduring condition of moral action, the possibility of character as a moral category is essential to Gustafson's moral anthropology. What, then, might we do about the apparent disparity between Haan's minimal assent to character as a empirically testable "characteristic functioning" and Macmurray's and Gustafson's more significant assertions of its value in the moral life? It may be that Macmurray's and Gustafson's disciplines allow for more interpretive theory. We can at least note that there are some (even empirically affirmed) enduring features of a person's moral constitution which carry over from situation to situation, and that an agent carries to a decision or action some personal history which is brought to bear on that decision or action.

²³ Ibid., 29.

Following from this comparison and contrast of Haan, Macmurray and Gustafson in service of the establishment of our foundational ethic, we might synthesize the perspectives of the three on moral anthropology with the following: **The human person is not merely an object in the events of life, but a free moral agent who responds to those events on a number of levels, notably, the intellectual and emotional levels.** Because persons bring a relatively stable individual history to each moral action, the agent's particular responses may be "characteristic," but their actual form is open to change, renewal and transformation.

III. Subjectivity, Creativity and Induction in Moral Decision-Making and Action

With an affirmation of both history as the locus of moral action and the basic freedom of persons in responding to the events and situations of life, we rightly suspect that the interactionists will propose for our foundational ethic a subjective, creative, and in some cases, inductive method of moral decision-making and action. This basic orientation is modified in various ways among the three theorists, and in this section, we will relate each of their respective purchases on the nature of subjectivity, creativity and induction in the moral life.

As we have noted above, both in Chapter Two and in the previous two sections of this chapter, Haan seems to put great stock in radical subjectivity, creativity and induction in moral action. For Haan, moral action is the

dialogue conducted within the consciousness of the agent, between two agents or between an institutional entity and the agent. That dialogue is conceived as being completely open-ended, and any outcome which is determined by the "parties" is acceptable, as long as no party has subverted the full participation of any person or position. In the dialogue, the particular dynamics and demands of the parties are revealed, and they work toward either a constructive or a restorative equitable solution of "equalization." One of the principal criteria for the adequacy of the solution is that it works.²⁴ The appropriate use of moral principles or "the moral tradition," as Haan calls it, is characterized as "creative."²⁵ Because she does not explicitate her meaning of "creative" in this regard, we are left to discern its meaning as "selective," "interpretive," or as any one of a number of other synonymous definitions. But one thing is clear: The parties who forge the moral balance are bound by few if any restrictive, extrinsic demands to which they must answer, either as they commence, conduct or terminate the dialogue. Moreover, as we discussed in the preceding section, Haan makes almost no room for "character." It is interesting to recall the metaphor which Haan employs in describing the investigation of the nature of morality: rebuilding our raft at sea, plank by plank. Such an image also serves to describe the parameters of basic moral-

²⁴ Haan, On Moral Grounds..., 67.

²⁵ Ibid.

action-conceived-as-dialogue for Haan. In short, we start with little except an impulse to reach an equalized agreement.

So for Haan, it would seem that moral action really does start from a blank-slate position, even though she would resist the notion that moral agency begins there. I have already pointed out the limit of such a conception, but it is worth repeating here. To say the least, it stretches one's imagination to envision the dialogue of human subjects with infinitely elastic biases of value and very limited "characteristic" ways of resolving moral difficulties. Further, since Haan makes room for the role of emotions, for example, in her moral anthropology, it would be more consistent that she would also allow for some form of emotional constitution, as emotions are not simply free-floating but come from some "emotional life," or "emotional stability." This is not to gainsay Haan's basic position about morality in general, which remains the cornerstone of insight for our foundational ethic: Dialogue is a highly particularized, creative moral response to the demands of conflicting or competing positions or parties, and as agents, they have the capacity to determine the outcome. But the seemingly ex nihilo creative moral response borders on the supra-human.

Affirming the subjective, personal, reciprocal and creative nature of morality, Macmurray characterizes more thoroughly than Haan the dynamic of the dialogue-leading-to-

moral response. We can fairly add that he is able to do so because of his theoretical domain, moral philosophy, which allows him to make assertions about the nature of morality which are not necessarily experimentally verified. In characterizing the dialogue, he is able to add two important qualifications to Haan's relatively unchecked creativity in forming the solutions to moral problems.

First, as we have seen, Macmurray makes theoretical allowance for character, the "persistent system of motives under which [the agent] acts under normal conditions." This character is most useful in determining a qualified predictability of the agent. The agent still has the capacity to form particular intentions which are suited to the demands at hand. But the agent does not come to the dialogue as a completely malleable consciousness. This, it seems, is an advance over Haan's thesis, which in its silence about personal constitutive values and behaviors, neglects a feature of the moral life which is, if not testable, at least intuitively affirmed.

Second, Macmurray comments on the content of dialogue, and he specifically notes the corrective feature of dialogue. If an agent employs Macmurray's "emotional reason," that by which the agent has a "sense of reality," the agent will want to test his or her own sense of reality, that is, one's own appropriation of value, by submitting it to the critique of another's sense of reality.

Although Haan steers clear of the content of the dialogue, Macmurray, then, does not. Macmurray's creative process of dialogue is not as contextually determined as Haan's. In addition to the content of the moral dilemma at hand, Macmurray states that the valuations of the agents, already established in part as a "character" of sorts and corrected, criticized, affirmed or complemented by the interaction, will be a part of the stuff of which the creative solution will be wrought.

Gustafson, too, sees moral decision-making and action as creative, subjective and inductive processes. In decision-making, what is required is sound discernment, sufficient and accurate accounting of what is at stake in a given situation; this discernment should culminate in fitting action. In both cases, Gustafson affirms the use of what might be termed "imaginative" capacities. In discernment, what is required is the ability to "see all that there is," to be "penetrating and accurate in observation" of a situation, the ability to locate a detail" and to be "accurate in perception."²⁶ This, as we have seen, is a matter of distinguishing important from unimportant information, determining the relationships of parts to the whole, as well as some appropriate interpreting of that information. Gustafson notes that two critical personal qualities in such discernment are sensitivity and flexibility.

²⁶ Gustafson, Theology and Christian Ethics, 100-101.

The action which is the fruit of such discernment is also grounded in a resourcefulness which goes beyond the merely cognitive, logical and deductive application of principles to particular situations. This is a "fitting" action, a description borrowed from H. Richard Niebuhr. It is action which is tailored to the time, place and circumstances of the situation.

The actual process which leads to sound discernment and fitting action is a dialogical one like that described by Haan. There is a necessary give-and-take from which the agents are able to perceive things about themselves and others. Beyond the affirmation of this form of discernment, though, Gustafson goes on to describe what the interaction yields: imagination, possibilities, different natures of the problem at hand, interpretation, sensibilities, empathy; dispositions are formed, powers and limitation are made known, we gain confidence as moral actors and we see the presence of evil.²⁷ In all of this, the "products" of the process, like the process itself, are much more of the order of inductive reasoning, imagery and creative vision than deductive reasoning, procedure and critical analysis. That is not to say that Gustafson dismisses the latter categories as unimportant. Quite the contrary, as we noted in Chapter Four, Gustafson asserts that sound discernment is a combination of the involvement of interaction with others

²⁷ Ibid., 39 ff.

and the disinterest of one's own critical and analytical capacities.²⁸

In Gustafson's clear declaration of the importance of character, he, like Macmurray, would allow for the stable values of the agents to have a deep effect on the interaction itself, in the point of departure for the interaction, in its conduct and in its eventual solution. As with Macmurray, Gustafson's allowance for character as "content" in the interaction differentiates him from Haan. In both Macmurray and Gustafson, character acts as a control of sorts on the interaction. According to Macmurray and Gustafson, the negotiation and the outcome of the dialogue would have certain parameters or boundaries due to the relatively stable content of the agents' moral lives.

Additionally, because Gustafson sees one's disposition and character as influenced, formed and transformed by religious belief, belief becomes yet another creative force determining the content of the interaction which yields the "fitting" action. How exactly does Gustafson envision this? The fitting action emerges from discernment which takes into account not only the above inductive and imaginative elements; the discernment also refers to the beliefs of the agent in the guiding question, "What is God enabling and requiring in this situation?" As is quite evident, the answer to that question, relying as it does on active faith

²⁸ Ibid.

in God and the "horizon" which accompanies faith, looks to elements such as imagination, perception and the authority of subjectivity as resources for moral discernment and action.

So three features of Gustafson's theory -- his notion of moral discernment as perception, his assertion that moral action is fitting action, and his view of the effect of faith on the shape of both discernment and action -- suggest not merely the acceptance but the importance of subjectivity, creativity and induction in the moral life. These features are important both in the individual agent and the interactive discernment between and among agents.

Accounting for the ways in which Haan, Macmurray and Gustafson concur as well as differ in their assertions about the qualities of moral discernment and action, we can form the following statement as another feature of our foundational ethic: **Consistent with the importance of history and a multivalent moral anthropology, the moral agent draws significantly on the resources of subjectivity, creativity and induction in the process of moral discernment and in determining the course of moral action.**

IV. A Relational Ethic, A Moral Community

With all of the above emphasis on the particular, individual situations of history and the nature and qualities of the singular moral agent, it is important to stress, even to reiterate, that our three theorists are interactionists, and that morality for all three consists in

relationality. Perhaps this is already evident from our discussion thus far, but in this section we return to this theme as a means of providing special emphasis for it. Specifically, we will return to the consideration of moral anthropology and the form of the moral life in each theorist, highlighting the role of relationality in each. Additionally, we will examine a related theme, how each views the communal context of morality.

Haan's "thin assumptions of value" lead her to the assertion that morality is interaction. It is fair to say, for example, that some of her reluctance to describe a "character" for an agent lies in the fact that she is most ready to see morality as that which occurs between and among agents, so to concentrate on the individual traits of one agent or another is to neglect the essence of morality, the dynamic between the agents.

Recall that the guiding inquiry for Haan is "What is morality?", not "What is the good?" or "What is virtue?" Framing the question in this way, her answer is necessarily rooted in action by a person and the effect which such action has on eliciting a reaction or response from an other or others. Departing from efforts by psychologists to describe morality in terms of the singular agent's cognitive-conceptual development, satisfaction of primitive impulses, or accrual of mores from a given culture, Haan has sought instead to study morality in practice, the "practical, everyday morality that given the opportunity,

all people would presumably endorse as the way they would ideally act."²⁹ As such, looking as she does to the creative tension between persons in conflict and collaboration over issues of value, she has circumscribed the task and provided early parameters for her answer. While her critics might say that such a move constitutes the naturalistic fallacy, she has looked beyond it to appeal to the common wisdom that morality does not happen in a vacuum such as the mind of the agent, but between and among persons, and the quality of those relationships is the core of morality.

As we noted above, this also has allowed Haan to formulate a moral anthropology in which the human person is seen to be "naturally" reciprocal. Of additional importance is Haan's thesis that change and development in the moral life is contingent upon social disequilibrium between agents and not, for example, a cognitive disequilibrium within the agent. Indeed, a recommended "educational intervention" in prompting moral growth is the provision of some interpersonal upheaval whereby the agents must practice, hone and develop social skills which are adequate to the task of equalizing the interests of the involved parties.

Of further interest in establishing relationality as the basis for morality in Haan's theory is her insistence on the full and equal participation of the agents in a given moral situation. It is necessary in the agents' seeking of

²⁹ Haan, "Moral Development and Action From a Social Constructivist Perspective," 3.

a moral solution that all positions, contributions and expectations be carefully, openly and fully articulated. This, as we have noted above, presumes several things. First, while agents must resolve a particular situation in equalization, they must also commence and conduct the dialogue on an equal footing, or at least as nearly an equal footing as possible. This requires that no one, by virtue of role or position, for example, enjoys a constitutionally unchecked advantage in the dialogue. By the same token, the environment for the exchange must be of such a quality that agents must be encouraged to share openly their actual concerns without fear of ignorance or reproach. Secondly, and a consequence of the above, particular emotional maneuvers which block effective dialogue, namely the "defending" ego processes which Haan outlines, must give way to a real "coping," which is the unguarded participation in a moral solution. Such participative coping results in a higher level of moral adequacy in the balances forged by the agents.³⁰

In reiterating relationality as another precipitate of Haan's theory, we return to Haan's indebtedness to Alexander Sesonske as a theoretical base upon which the social-interactional proposal is built. Sesonske's fundamental contention, that community is the starting point for moral action, is a "moral ground" upon which Haan stands. Again, Sesonske avers that: 1) Obligations arise from the

³⁰ Haan, "Moral Development and Action....," 22.

commitments we make to each other; 2) We owe to the communities from which we come any moral growth which we have known; and 3) "Rights" are by definition communally constituted, i.e., "personal" rights are only recognized insofar as they are recognized for all others in the community.³¹

It is interesting to note that while one may certainly detect the influence of such contentions in the relational nature of the interactional proposal, no extended theory of "community" as such is pronounced, as we shall see it is in Macmurray and Gustafson. The "obligations" which one has to a community, or what one "owes" to a community, or the universalizability of claims in a community, all legitimate areas of discussion in moral theory, are not explored in the interactional proposal. This may again be the function of the appropriate limits of Haan's project. While group contexts are acknowledged as critical factors in, for example, the characterization of the friendship groups or familial backgrounds,³² "community" as a moral entity standing on its own is not a prominent part of the interactional proposal.

Macmurray, too, affirms in several ways relationality as the core of morality. First, over and against

³¹ See Alexander Sesonske, Value and Obligation: The Foundation of an Empiricist Ethical Theory (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1957)

³² See Chapter 7 and Chapter 15 respectively, of Haan, On Moral Grounds...

Aristotle's conception of human moral development as the unfolding of potential rationality through the organic acquisition of habits and traits, Macmurray states that the newborn is not an unfolding anything, but an innately relational being who is merely helpless, in need of the care of another from the very beginning. And it is precisely that need of another, the need of some dynamic relation, which makes the newborn a person. As we noted in Chapter Three, Macmurray boldly asserts that, "in virtue of this fact, he is a person...His essential natural endowment is the impulse to communicate with another human being."³³

This paves the way for another approach by Macmurray to the centrality of relationality in the moral life, an approach consistent with Haan's. Given the natural endowment of relationality, Macmurray insists that moral action in the world is in the "form of the personal." By the "form of the personal," Macmurray means that the agent is not construed as an observer, but as a participant in the world, not a subject looking out on events of the world, but an agent bringing about change in the world through cooperation with others. So one's relation to the world is not knowing in the sense of "knowing of" or "knowing about," but knowing in the way that one knows a close friend. We have noted that this was one way in which Macmurray declared his departure from the solitary original position of "I think" as that which characterizes the essence of morality.

³³ Macmurray, Persons in Relation, 51. (Emphasis mine).

Instead, by the "form of the personal," the position of "I and You," when humanity is most itself, when it is most free, as Macmurray would have it, it is "apprehending and enjoying a world outside of itself in company with others."³⁴

Yet another tack for this assertion about the basic relationality of humanity is the positive motivation of interdependence for moral action. Like Haan's equalization, Macmurray's interdependence is the motivation by which various personal needs and claims are taken into account. But unlike Haan's equalization which is ultimately founded upon the respect and assimilation of the interests of both parties, Macmurray's interdependence aims at a genuine love. Haan's equalization is sabotaged by defending mechanisms which can effectively abort it. Macmurray's interdependence can be sabotaged by manipulation through the pseudo-loves of fighting and fleeing, fearful defense mechanisms of a sort, as we have shown above. Despite this divergence in the motivation, the similarity between Haan and Macmurray in the overall relational conception of the moral life is striking.

Macmurray does articulate a theory of community which is an outgrowth of his relational view of humanity. Motivated by the giving and receiving of true, heterocentric, interdependent love of others, we come to know that even as we are apprehending and evaluating others, we are being apprehended and evaluated by them. Such an

³⁴ Macmurray, Freedom in the Modern World, 170-175.

experience of relationality with others can lead us by extrapolation to an experience of An Other, God, so that we come to know that we are creatures in a relational world, parts in a whole which is relational. For Macmurray, religion is the conscious realization of that truth, and for that reason, it is primarily constituted in the experience of community. Our demand for communion is not just a matter of respecting the interests and claims of others, as it is for Haan; it is a recognition that we are relational by divine design and function. In consequence, community and relationality have theological significance. Participation in them is to live in league with others who see in their human relations the reflection of a God-who-relates. To choose exemption from the community because of fearful defensiveness is to ignore not merely the negotiable interests of others, but the moral "form of the personal," the way that we know the God-who-relates.

With Macmurray, then, we have the introduction of theological meaning attached to relationality. In addition to the establishment of relationality as the form of the moral life, Macmurray introduces the idea that for believers, the experience of an other may lead by analogical extrapolation to the experience of an Other. Gustafson advances this insight even further in his work, theorizing about both relationality and community in light of belief in God. We will pay particular attention to this in the next section, in which we develop the theme of a "God-centered"

ethic. But for now, as we examine the themes of relationality and community in the three interactionists, we look to Gustafson's articulation of those themes in conjunction with Haan's and Macmurray's.

Like Haan and Macmurray, Gustafson conceives of the form of the moral life as interaction between people: Moral activity comes about in relationships which are somehow characterized by mutuality and dynamism, but are also limited by a determinacy present because of stable factors in each agent ("character"). As such, these relationships have a marked past, present and future which give shape to the interactions which constitute morality. The proper or "fitting" dynamic of the relations with others is found in a process of discernment which is a matter of perception, distinction of important from unimportant factors, and imaginative inferences characterized by sensitivity and flexibility, all held in tension between the personal involvement and the analytical disinterest of the agents.

This commonality established, Gustafson moves away from Haan's psychological purchase on relationality, joining Macmurray's thesis regarding a theological significance for that relationality. Briefly, that theological significance is that in the belief in an immanent and communicative God, the human person sees the activity of God in the activity of relationships, as the Creator is in the interdependence of all of life. This is very much akin to Macmurray's analogical extrapolation involving the move from

"relationality with an other" to "relationality with an Other," even though Gustafson goes on carefully to point out that the analogy has its limits in that no person ought ever to presume to know directly the indicative or the imperative of God's action. As we shall see in the next section, this does not preclude a discernment which centers on God, but it does qualify Macmurray's analogy.

Indeed, one of the distinctive modifications which Gustafson provides for both Haan's and Macmurray's articulations of relationality is the maxim of moral discernment that one ought to "relate things in a manner appropriate to their relations to God."³⁵ For Haan, this would be quite a theoretical (and unscientific) leap; for Macmurray, less so. While Haan is most concerned with the specific relational dynamics between persons, and Macmurray can see the theological significance of relationality, neither would speculate on the relations of agents to God as a baseline for moral discernment.

Of the three interactionists, Gustafson has the most comprehensive considerations on "community" as a moral category. We have noted that for Haan, community is relatively undeveloped as a category in and of itself, despite her debt to Sesonke and her dependence on group dynamics in testing. For Macmurray, community is more developed than it is in Haan, that is, more than a

³⁵ Gustafson, Ethics From a Theocentric Perspective, Volume 2, 298.

respecting of others' rights and interests. It is a response to a divine design that would have persons "apprehending and enjoying a world outside of ourselves in company with others" who see in their relations the reflection of a God-who-relates.

Gustafson has relatively little to say about community outside of a theological context. He does note, however, in building his case for a theological community of moral discourse, that one need not even rely upon theological categories to acknowledge the value of the communal form of moral discernment:

To demythologize such an affirmation, we have simply the commonplace observation that discourse and deliberation between informed and serious men is more likely to lead to action that is fitting and ethically defensible than are other procedures.³⁶

But the best representation of Gustafson's thought on community is a theological one about the believing community. In remarkable coincidence with Macmurray, community for Gustafson is, first and foremost, a locus of God's activity, a place where interaction with others is given an added theological dimension:

From the experience of others or of otherness, [community], for reasons of heart and mind, respects and reveres an Other; it acknowledges dependence upon and gratitude to an Other; it develops a sense of obligation to an Other, and a sense of repentance in the face of its failure to relate properly to the Other.³⁷

³⁶ Gustafson, The Church as Moral Decision-Maker, 85.

³⁷ Gustafson, Ethics From a Theocentric Perspective, Volume One, 135-136.

Beyond Macmurray, though, Gustafson examines the actual functioning and the role of the community. As we noted above in Chapter Four, for Gustafson, the community takes up the purposes of God -- creating, sustaining, restraining and making better the quality of life in three specific areas: the ethos of the culture in which it finds itself, the interpersonal relationships within it and the institutions to which it relates.³⁸ The community, then, is not only the grouping of those who can see the activity of God in their own relations, the community as an entity unto itself, takes up a collective charge to be the instrument of God in some fashion. It has some mission of value to its members and to "the outside," and this mission is not entirely characterized by the description of its internal relations.

This is not, however, to say that the community does not properly attend to the interactions of its own members which give shape to the ongoing perceptions of God's enablings and requirements. Consistent with Gustafson's notion of discernment, the internal role of the community is not a didactic one, but an illuminative one:

The task of the church is not to tell them what [members] ought to do in specificity, but to enable them to see possibilities of moral value, and pitfalls of temptation in what they are doing and in what they can do.³⁹

What is the outcome of this collective discernment? It is a formation of consensus in the community which, for all of

³⁸ Gustafson, The Church as Moral Decision-Maker, 66-70.

³⁹ Ibid., 35-36.

its theological underpinnings, is not unlike Haan's notion of equalization. Taking into account the "readings" of the members of the community of the course for moral action, readings which unlike Haan's theory, would include a perception of God's enabling and requiring of the agent and the community, the community collaboratively determines an adequately balanced moral response.

Finally, open participation in Gustafson's process of communal discernment is critical. In a combination of the insights of both Macmurray and Haan regarding participation -- that is, active agency and unimpeded contribution -- Gustafson expounds participation especially in relation to the role of the minister in the community:

The authority of the religious expert is not granted by virtue of his knowledge and ordination, and therefore neither quiet assent nor vigorous obedience is forthcoming. The leader becomes a person whose function it is to give guidance to a consensus-forming process, in and through which particular judgments (including his own) can be clarified and brought to bear on the relevant points of action.⁴⁰

Instead, for Gustafson, by putting stock in a participation (reminiscent of both Haan and Macmurray) by which all actively contribute and none, including the minister, dominates, the community engages in a moral discourse which is truly collegial:

Discourse involves mutual probing, each participant with his special skills, his gifts for wisdom, his technical knowledge, his powers of persuasion, enlightening the process toward consensus about what deeds and words are consonant

⁴⁰ Ibid., 130-131.

with the faith, what performances are consistent with and⁴¹ expressive of the beliefs of the church.

Reinforcing Haan's finding that led groups had more adequate moral action and growth than dominated groups, Gustafson's theory of participation, as we have noted above, prescribes a minister who has enough confidence in God's presence in the interaction of a community that all participants in the moral discourse will have a voice.

We again seek to formulate an assertion which reflects a synthesis of the themes of relationality and community in Haan, Macmurray and Gustafson and how their perspectives affirm, complement, coincide and critique each other. Note here that with the incorporation of the theological significance of relationality and community by Macmurray and Gustafson, we begin to examine their distinctive positive contributions which are not treated by Haan. While Haan remains as the centerpiece of our proposal, the theological modifications and amendments to her perspective are critical to it as a theological project in service of the life of the church. With that in mind, in regard to relationality and community, we assert: **All human persons are social beings. No fitting moral action may be discerned in isolation from its effects on other agents; as such, ours is a relational ethic derived through communal participative dialogue in which God's enablings and requirements may come to be known.**

⁴¹ Ibid., 154.

V. The Role of Belief in God and Jesus Christ

As is evident from our discussion above, Haan and her associates have afforded us the key insight from psychology that interaction is not merely the vehicle for morality, for teaching it and inculcating certain values which need to be appropriated, although it can be that. Interaction, even in its barest forms is moral action itself. It is not at the periphery of ethics but at the center. This insight, based on experience and grounded in an empirical purchase on reality, is a new and relatively underutilized perspective in religious ethics and pastoral practice, despite the warrants which we discussed in Chapter One. Our point of departure is an empirical one which states that balances achieved in quality interactions constitute morality.

Others of differing methodologies have similar interactional perspectives; we have looked to them to fill out and critique Haan's proposal in order that we might formulate a comprehensive foundational ethic. While they do not have the special strength of Haan's method -- namely, empirical science to back assertions -- they have demonstrated other strengths accepted within their native disciplines. Theirs have been assertions of "thick" claims grounded in values endemic to the premises of philosophy and theology.

So we have gleaned the central insight about morality from Haan and fortified it and critiqued it with other perspectives. In addition to the methodological amendments,

Macmurray and Gustafson have proved to be strong partners in this discussion aimed at advancing notions of Christian ethics and pastoral practice. While sharing Haan's interactional affirmations, they have an attachment to the role of religious belief in the moral life and therefore have begun to demonstrate an applicability of Haan's insight to our project.

Macmurray states that one can actually come to belief in God by attending to a "personal universe" in which God expresses the kind of personal relationship with us that we know in our own personal relationships with others. That is, the Universal is revealed in the particular, and there is indeed a "path to God through human experience."

Gustafson, too, acknowledges that the form of the moral life is interactional, and he assents to the phenomenon of finding the Universal in the particular, but he proceeds to make other claims regarding the moral life for those who would call themselves Christian, addressing allied questions germane to the believing agent and community. We do well, then, to pay special attention to this Christian congruence with Haan's interactional perspective but which has a theological aspect which preserves the prominence of the belief that God and Christ are at the center of the moral life.

What is that theological aspect? Prescinding from the discussion in the preceding section of Gustafson's notion that in belief one may detect the enablings and the

requirements of God in the movements of a community, we examine and hold three central aspects of Gustafson's moral theology which are important for the integration of the interactional proposal and Christian belief. For a more detailed description, I refer the reader to Chapter Four.

First, we recall a linchpin of "theocentric ethics," that in moral considerations, all things must be related in a manner appropriate to their relations to God. While hardly a material principle which offers the prospect of radically clarifying specific situations, this nonetheless allows for a certain convergence of psychological and spiritual considerations in the discernment process. Again, while it is true that such a maxim may only put a burden on the agent who is not omniscient regarding all things' relations to God, at the very least it provokes in the moral imagination of the believer a healthy humility about the ultimate adequacy of justice and equity as they are humanly conceived. God, then, becomes the locus of ethics, a "prior reality," who pervades any discernment of the good and the right thing to do.

This, it would seem, is a freeing as well as a binding truth. There is contained within it the radical freedom of a reformed or even existentialist Christian perspective that we may discern and act with confidence that God's creative and redemptive love takes precedence over our human aspirations toward justice and justification. There is also the binding truth that moral discernment and action are not

entirely comprehended by the description of psychological dynamics, which Gustafson may dismiss as "androcentric" in their orientation.

Second, religious belief effects the shape and content of one's morality, such that the dynamics of interaction alone do not determine the contours of the eventual determination. As we have noted, belief in God engenders "senses" of God which in turn give rise to moral discernment and action. For example, if one has a sense of the undeserved goodness of God toward oneself, in gratitude, that person may pass along that goodness to others in what he or she determines to be a similar fashion. As Gustafson illustrates,

Gratitude as a reason of mind and heart for being moral has been a deep and persistent one in the biblical communities and in the life and thought of the church. "Freely you have received, freely give" is more than a convenient saying to induce churchgoers to place money in an offering basket during worship. The comma, in a sense, covers the fulcrum of a way of life. In its affective dimensions, the sense of gratitude moves the will to act.⁴²

The same may be said of other "senses" of God such as those outlined in Chapter Four. By the "content" of these senses of God, the believing agent may be transformed in disposition and character to be a person of gratitude, repentance, possibility and the like.

Belief can also influence moral discernment and action through the believing community's interpretation of specific

⁴² Gustafson, Can Ethics Be Christian?, 101.

events by traditional religious symbols and language. A symbol such as the cross, or language, such as the "paschal mystery" offers to the believer further "input" in moral determinations. The symbol or language may disclose features of the issue yet undisclosed. Such interpretive devices must, of course, yield to certain criteria for selection. Similarly, a religious principle or value may be the guiding light for the believer in a given discernment process. Once again, the point here is that there is distinctive substance to the discernment of believing agents which is not subsumed in the psychological or philosophical interactional proposals.

Third, belief in Jesus Christ, the essential tenet of Christianity, effects the moral life. I would note here that Gustafson provides little explanation for what really constitutes "belief."⁴³ Of particular interest and, I think, difficulty, is the relative inconsistency between the centrality of Christ in, for example, Christ and the Moral Life and the minimal role which Christ has in the moral life as it is articulated by Gustafson in Ethics From A Theocentric Perspective. I have outlined this theoretical snag in Chapter Four.

In Gustafson's (early) constructive conception of this, however vague his particular idea of "belief" is, he states that belief in Christ entails for the agent a difference in

⁴³ Indeed, he may be referring to "piety" under which faith is subsumed. See the discussion on pp. 201-204 of Ethics From a Theocentric Perspective, Volume 1.

perspective and posture, specifically an experience of goodness which is full of hopeful possibility and trust in God, both in the short term and in a long-term, "dispositional" manner. Moreover, Christ effects the intentions, or future-orientation of the believer, principally by means of the believer testing the consistency of intended action against his or her own faith in the Jesus of tradition and Scripture. Finally, Christ provides a difference in the understanding of moral norms in the believer through the creative application of the message of Christ's teaching found in, for example, the love command or the parables. In all this, there is the suggestion that Christ illuminates a moral path by teachings and norms and enables the journey on that path by the formation and transformation of perspectives, postures, dispositions and intentions of the believing agent. That is, Christ provides some actual content to the moral interaction of believers, and as a powerful locus of personal constitutional strength and transformation, Christ provides a resource for moral action which does not yield to empirical description.

We again derive a synthetic assertion from the theological aspects of our considerations up to this point, which are principally encountered in Gustafson's thought. This element in the construction of our foundational ethic for pastoral moral discernment is critical, as it effectively modifies the fundamental contours of the interactional proposal so that they might profitably be

employed in the Christian setting. We formulate that assertion as the following: **For the Christian, the moral response is centered on God's relationship to the human person and the person's relationship to God. The actual content of the believer's morality -- dispositions, interpretations of experience and normative considerations -- are shaped by belief in God and Jesus Christ. Christian believers look to Christ as the one who illuminates and empowers a moral response to God's relationship with us.**

With this chapter, we have begun our two-part task of constructing a foundational ethic and developing a critical method for pastoral moral discernment in the Roman Catholic tradition. In conducting a theoretical conversation between the three interactional perspectives, we have clarified the contributions of each to a comprehensive foundational ethic in service of pastoral moral discernment. Although Haan's insight about the interactional nature of morality remains as the base for our constructed ethic, Macmurray and Gustafson contribute to the five assertions describing the features of our ethic through the affirmations, critiques and nuances of Haan's theory which we have drawn from their own interactional theories of morality. In summary, that foundational ethic as we have established it is historical in its method, multidimensional in its moral anthropology, imaginative and creative in its resolutions toward a course

for action, social, relational and communal in its perspectival approach, and centered on our relationship to God in Christ.

We proceed now to the last chapter in order to derive from this foundational ethic suggestions for a method of pastoral moral discernment in the Roman Catholic tradition. Following the proposal for that critical method and an explication of one of the charter documents from the Roman Catholic magisterial tradition needing pastoral translation and implementation, Paul VI's Humanae Vitae, we will briefly exemplify how the method might be employed in the pastoral and moral life of the Church.

CHAPTER 6

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE FOUNDATIONAL ETHIC: TOWARD A CRITICAL METHOD OF PASTORAL MORAL DISCERNMENT

We began this project by delineating a problem for both Catholic pastoral practice and moral theology, the absence or at least inadequacy of extant theories and methods of moral discernment and decision-making in Catholic pastoral settings. We noted that this was an especially germane issue for a post-Conciliar Church, which has sought to renew its own approaches to pastoral care and moral theology.

With a view toward the eventual further renewal of Catholic moral theology through the effective incorporation of an underutilized source, psychology, and with the accompanying employment of other complementary sources, we proposed in the preceding chapter elements of a comprehensive "foundational" ethic which might serve as a theoretical and methodological basis for such "pastoral moral discernment." Once again, for the sake of clarity, we have defined pastoral moral discernment as "the consideration of a personal situation in a Catholic ministerial setting by which a course of moral action is determined."

In this final chapter, we turn our attention to a critical method for pastoral moral discernment based upon

the foundational ethic which was proposed in the last chapter. Relying upon the five theoretical assertions which we forged from the interactional sources and which characterize that foundational ethic, we will now draw from them practical implications which suggest the contours of a method of pastoral moral discernment. In those five assertions, we have generally designated that foundational ethic as historical in its method; multi-dimensional in its moral anthropology; imaginative and creative in its resolutions toward a course for action; social, relational and communal in its perspectival approach; and centered on our relationship to God in Christ. We seek now to answer the question, "What does this ethic suggest as a practical procedure for pastoral moral discernment, both for the one seeking assistance and for the one seeking to provide it?" Our proposal of a critical method for pastoral moral discernment will consist of practical recommendations which flow from the various elements of the foundational ethic.

We noted in the introduction that one conceptual framework for Catholic pastoral moral discernment has been articulated in various official Church documents. If we were to characterize the underlying ethical method of that framework, we would say it is principally deontological in its approach. That is, the pastoral interpretation, translation, or discernment of the message of a document is largely a matter of determining the Church member's ability or inability to measure up to the stipulations of a moral

command or duty as it is singularly promulgated by a uniquely competent moral magisterium. "Pastoral," then, becomes a code word for certain allowances and leniencies in determining culpability, but it has little to do with respect for the moral integrity of the individual who does not immediately recognize and embrace the moral commands which are promulgated by the magisterium. As a means of demonstrating the relative adequacy of such a framework for pastoral moral discernment, especially in contradistinction to the method which we develop below, I will outline and critique it as it appears in a document of central importance in the life of the post-Conciliar Church, Paul VI's encyclical on the regulation of human birth, Humanae Vitae.

As with any proposal of a practical "method" in ministry, we do not purport here to address every aspect of sound moral discernment, nor are we interested in the development of a step-by-step system of operation for the largely intuitive activity of discernment. Moreover, we cannot hope to develop a method so complete that it replaces the revered art which is pastoral care. Nonetheless, the proposed critical method of pastoral moral discernment which follows, even in its nascent form which only elucidates elements to which one must attend in sound moral discernment, is a contribution toward filling a gap in Catholic moral theory and practice.

I. An Historical Worldview: Discernment and Experience

The foundational ethic which we formulated in the preceding chapter is grounded in history. That is, rather than deriving the basis for ethics in a static, unchanging cosmos which yields its own immutable, "objective" dictates for the moral life, our foundational ethic determines in the unfolding of events over the course of time a significance to which we must attend in order to lead a moral life. Determining that significance, of course, requires interpretation of discrete events and circumstances and not necessarily the classification of them according to an imposed objective moral order.

How does this influence the form and content of pastoral moral discernment? Perhaps the most evident effect of the acceptance of history on moral discernment is that it transforms the very nature of discernment and the expectations which moral agents have for discernment. With a closed, monolithic, static, objective world order as the point of departure, moral "discernment" is in reality the mere application of principles to the endless variety of exigencies in life. The "interpretation" which is required in such applications can be fairly reduced to a deductivistic logic whereby the particular circumstance of a given life constitutes the minor premise of a logical syllogism, which serves as the conceptual framework for the settling of cases of conscience. There are, of course, contingencies and situations from real life which do not

immediately lend themselves to classification according to the first principles of a syllogism; that is, there are "remainders" when the division into moral categories is completed. For example, responsible moral guidance may include the demands of being shepherd, counselor and manager. But these are adjudicated as "exceptions" which demand their own special "pastoral" consideration. As we have noted above, the discrete events of a person's life are merely accidental to a well established world order.

With the affirmation of an historical worldview, moral discernment becomes a different undertaking. If we admit that change, development, evolution, formation and transformation, for example, are the very substance of life, that time is not just the medium through which an objective moral order plays itself out but is instead the chronicle of the actual content of life and God's salvation of humanity, then "discernment" becomes a genuine interpretation of God's ways and our response to those ways. That interpretation has its attendant difficulties: It is not nearly as clean and orderly as the syllogistic determinations of moral culpability which serve the classicist worldview. It requires attention to the experience and development of the individual moral agent, the particular circumstances in question, the timing of the moral decision, and the determination and execution of an appropriate action as the continuance of the significance of history. None of these elements may be immediately clear, so a real discernment,

with all of its possible pitfalls, must ensue. To take history seriously is to make awesome demands of moral discernment. Let us explore these elements of pastoral moral discernment which are the results of attending to history as the locus of morality.

First, pastoral moral discernment must directly account for the **experience** of the believer. If one assents to the basic idea that the events of history constitute God's involvement in the lives of believers, then an individual's account of his or her experience in life carries a freight of significance which requires recall and attention in times of discernment. This account is more than a mere chronology; it is a story of events, situations, relationships, turning points, setbacks, achievements, former discernments and decisions, all of which require selection and interpretation in their conveyance. If we take history seriously, it is ultimately a story of faith, a new purchase on God's involvement in the human arena. Heuristic devices and images may be applied to both individual, discrete events and to the account as a whole. The effects of relating and interpreting the experience of the believer would be manifold, but certainly one major outcome would be the establishment or reinforcement of the notion that a life is a unique unfolding of God's good and creative intentions, and that the believer may rest on the "evidence" of such past involvement to look to the prospects of the situation at hand.

Practically speaking, the role of the pastoral minister in engendering a sense of "holy history" as a resource for moral discernment is to elicit the account of one's experience and to assist in its interpretation. We will outline particular features of the account later. At this point, it is sufficient to state merely that an educed autobiography qualified by the perspective of faith can serve as a critical starting point for moral discernment because it points to the enduring truth that God's locus of activity is not restricted to the overtly religious moments such as worship, appropriation of doctrine or rare instances of meditation, for example, but can be appreciated in all of the events of a life, and, more generally in all of human history.

This appreciation of personal experience has particular force in determining the **role which norms and principles play** in pastoral moral discernment.¹ As synthetic statements of the collective wisdom of believers, norms and principles serve as one expression of the experience of God-in-history. As traditional moral experience in condensed form, they help to consolidate the discernment process by offering to the discerner generic guidance which saves him

¹ For an extensive treatment of the role of norms and principles in Christian ethics, see Gene Outka and Paul Ramsey, Norm and Context in Christian Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968). Also see Richard Gula, What Are They Saying About Moral Norms (Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1982), especially Chapter 5, "Moral Norms and Pastoral Guidance."

or her from treating each situation as wholly new. The pastoral minister does well, then, to incorporate them into discernment, and, as we will see below, there are times when this is especially incumbent upon the minister as the representative of a community steeped in a particular identity.

Indeed, interactional pastoral discernment is best described as a co-construction of a course of moral action. With this in mind, in upholding the traditions of the Christian community, the minister can afford to hold neither a value-neutral stance in hopes that the agent will simply arrive at a moral determination, nor a bluntly instructional stance, from which the agent will appropriate "correct" values. There are, of course, risks involved in co-constructive discernment. Dysfunctional relations among the participants or poor anterior formation of the participants within a corrupt or inadequate ethos could subvert the process. An honest standoff could occur. Thus the "art" of pastoral assistance with discernment lies in the minister accurately representing the values and claims of the community, but with a sensitivity and a respect for the views of the agent.

But norms and principles ought not bear more weight than is their due in pastoral moral discernment.² In light

² For a discussion of the proper relationship of norms to discernment of a particular course of action, see Timothy E. O'Connell, Principles for a Catholic Morality (Minneapolis: Seabury Press, 1978), Chapter 15, "Morality: Values and Norms," especially pp. 163-164.

of the primacy which we have granted to the historical worldview over a classicist worldview, a model of pastoral moral discernment which commences from norms and principles will in most situations prove wanting. To the extent that they can be assimilated into moral discernment as expressions of experience they will assist the discernment. Insofar as the minister insists that they are the touchstone of the discernment process because they somehow serve as the connection to an objective moral order which exists outside of history, they may very well hamstring the quality of the discernment.

With an historically-grounded ethic at its base, pastoral moral discernment must also attend to the **moral development** of the discerning agent. This may emerge in the relation of the discerner's experience and background in the form of autobiography, but not necessarily. What is at stake here is the agent's capacity for the appreciation of certain positions and for carrying out particular courses of moral action. This kind of judgment on the part of the minister, even with the active involvement of the discerner, is not an easy one. As we have seen in Chapter One, there is no shortage of theories to which one may subscribe in determining the moral maturity of an individual. Although we have sought to demonstrate the relative advantage of the social interactional proposal, it is not our purpose here to suggest its use as a diagnostic device. (Indeed, Haan would shun the use of it for such purposes. Much of the impetus

for her revision of Kohlberg's scheme was the desire to introduce a more fluent, less tightly structured system to describe moral development and action. "Diagnosis" becomes more tentative by design in the interactional proposal.)

Instead, the point is that in accepting a changing, evolving world in which God is present in the events of life, we can move confidently in accepting the moral development of the agent as a critical consideration. It is necessary to gauge in some way the present moral maturity of the agent, and insofar as is possible, the history and the future of that growth, in order to contextualize the particular discernment at hand. While former attempts to describe "pastoral" moral discernment included categories such as "invincible ignorance" in an effort to appropriate the issue of the moral capacity of the agent, such a minimalist approach ought not suffice. A more adequate model of discernment, one which is not strictly interested in loopholes in principles and the relative culpability of the agent, must account in a positive and nuanced fashion for the unique history of the individual.³

The incorporation of moral development into the discernment method suggests another dimension of a critical model of pastoral moral discernment. With due respect to moral development and the history of the agent, pastoral

³ For an interesting dialogue between psychological theories of moral development and Christian belief, see Bonnidell Clouse, Moral Development: Perspectives in Psychology and Christian Belief (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985).

moral discernment is integrated into the life of the believer as an **ongoing process**. As such, pastoral moral discernment would be more akin to spiritual direction than to legal casuistry, attending to the larger picture of one's life, with special heed paid to its moral dimensions over time. By encouraging and participating in a model of discernment in which the historical continuity of the agent is important, the pastoral minister could be of more assistance in occasions of moral dilemma and crisis. Relying upon knowledge of the ongoing response of the agent to God's initiative, the minister is not reduced to "legal" casuistic advice, crisis intervention counseling, or the strict role functions of a sacramental forum. Ideally, pastoral moral discernment informed by history becomes less an intervention and more an accompaniment in the life of the believer.

As we noted in the last chapter, all three of the interactional theorists to which we have appealed as sources for our foundational ethic support the notion that "moral" impulses must be translated into action in order to qualify as truly moral. From Haan's stress on the everyday quality of our dialogical interactions to Macmurray's turn from the "I think" position to the "I do" position to Gustafson's insistence that agency is constituted in one's ability to follow through on intentions, we have seen that action, the discrete unit of history, is the validating facet of morality. We draw on this insight for another implication

of an historically-grounded ethic for a critical method for pastoral moral discernment: Effective strategies for practical action must be a part of the determinations of pastoral moral discernment. That is, the discernment must **culminate in action**. This implication is perhaps painfully obvious to any pastoral minister who has had to wrestle with the often central question of one seeking assistance with moral discernment: "What should I do?" But it warrants the designation as an important feature of a model of pastoral moral discernment because by locating a criterion for adequate moral discernment in practical action, we avoid the deficiency of the strictly analytical schemes of "philosopher-kings," unassailable logic which is only remotely connected to the situation at hand. Further, by holding ourselves to this standard of praxis, moral theology enjoys the prospect of being transformed from an arcane and antiseptic enterprise of juggling principles to a theological reflection on the actual moral balances which believers must strike in moral discernment.

II. A Multivalent Moral Anthropology: Interdependence, Intuition, Analysis and Character

Central to our consideration of a critical method of pastoral moral discernment is a reflection on the moral anthropology which Haan, Macmurray and Gustafson have together formed in our foundational ethic. Because the basic view of the human person shapes the formal parameters of morality, and these in turn inform the practical methods

of discernment, we return to the anthropology of our foundational ethic to note its influence on the proposed pastoral method.

We have noted that Haan, Macmurray and Gustafson all hold a "positive" view of the human person. That is, in all three of the theorists, there is a fundamental confidence that persons are capable of, indeed, tend toward relationships with others which are marked by a relational goodness -- mutual cooperation, reciprocity and even community to some extent. Although the three arrive at this position by means of their own respective disciplinary methods, they all see a basic propensity of humanity toward interdependence as a point of departure for moral reflection. Moreover, each affirms a view of humanity in which the person is an agent who can freely fashion responses to the events of life, the person makes a specific response drawing on the resources of emotion and intuition as well as intellect, and the person comes to form enduring qualities, traits or skills which he or she can practice, hone and transfer to new situations which demand moral responses.

As we shall see below, this moral anthropology suggests certain guiding principles for methods of pastoral moral discernment. As we shall see later in this chapter, both this moral anthropology and the procedures for discernment which it implies may be contrasted to the latent and manifest moral anthropology and model for discernment which

one encounters in various Church documents, including Humanae Vitae.

To affirm a basically positive moral anthropology as a hallmark of our foundational ethic is to prescribe a certain **perspectival trust** on the part of both minister and discerner in pastoral moral discernment.⁴ While this may sound a bit disingenuous to those who assume such trust would automatically exist in a sensitive relationship such as pastoral moral discernment, it bears explicit pronouncement in the face of contrasting moral anthropologies which make dominant a fundamental selfishness, ignorance or value neutrality in the human condition. The latter anthropologies would make ample room for a highly deontological or at least didactic mode of pastoral moral discernment for the minister, because the minister could have little or no assurance that the human condition, left to its own resources, would ever arrive at a sound course of moral action. To see the human person in the positive light to which we have alluded briefly above (and in more detail in Chapter Five) is to propose a pervasive environment of trust in discernment by which both minister and discerner can afford to initiate and receive, talk and listen.

⁴ On the balance between empathic and moral considerations in pastoral counseling, see Don S. Browning, The Moral Context of Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), Chapter Five, "Toward a Model of Care," especially p. 106.

The moral anthropology of our composite foundational ethic also states that the human person must be regarded in moral matters as one who responds on emotional and intuitional levels as well as an intellectual level. In short, pastoral moral discernment must **account for factors which are are not subsumed under the purview of the strictly rational.** For example, as all three of the theorists have shown, the attention to emotions in moral action and decision-making is an apt means of approaching the complex issue of moral motivation. Haan has noted the enabling as well as disabling effects of "coping" and "defending" techniques in moral dialogues which may well be fueled by emotional states. As we have stated above, the conscientious pastoral minister would do well to attend to these as potential lubricants or frictions in the quality of moral discernment, not merely because it makes for a better environment of empathic regard, but because it makes for higher quality moral decision-making. Macmurray theorizes about "emotional reason," whereby one makes unabashedly evaluative statements based upon "value judgments," highly denounced in Critical Philosophy as notoriously undependable emotional preferences. Gustafson looks to moral "senses" such as gratitude and direction, aptly described as confluences of emotions and perceptions, which inform and even motivate in moral discernment.

When one admits emotion as a potent anthropological factor in determining moral action, development and

discernment, pastoral moral discernment may be conducted with special deference to, rather than ignorance of, the emotions and intuitions, those particular apprehensions which are possible without apparent reflective rationality.⁵ Practically speaking, what might this mean for the pastoral minister assisting discernment? The minister must employ methods which stir these emotional-moral connections in the believer without manipulating them. One recommendation which serves as no surprise to a seasoned pastoral minister is that discussions of virtue, morality, transformation, conversion and discipleship can be generated readily on the "emotional" level of sensibilities and intuitions through the effective incorporation of stories, parables, scriptural and non-scriptural narratives. Often, this is the technique of the best pastors, who in efforts to support and challenge the faithful, rely more upon their own ability to provide an evocative interpretive context for a particular issue than upon their ability to make a persuasive presentation of propositional material about the issue. This, we say, "speaks to the heart" and the subsequent change, enlightenment and discernment are based upon the hearer's "reasons of the heart," "reasons" which are much more emotive and intuitive than intellectual, analytical and deductive.

⁵ Browning recognizes the role of intuitive experience in moral decision-making, but assigns it a complementary role in his five-level model of practical moral thinking. See Religious Ethics and Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), Chapter Five.

This is not to gainsay the role of the intellectual, rational and analytical capacities of the human person in moral action and decision-making. Even though all of the interactional theorists see the strictly rational as only one facet of a comprehensive moral determination, none negates the importance of those elements in moral discernment. As we will point out, there is, however, a difference in the interactionists' conception of the access to the rational factors of moral decision-making, namely that one comes to such understandings through dialogue with another and not in the privacy of one's mind. But each maintains a view of the human person which esteems the elements of cognition associated with the rational. These elements will characterize a method of pastoral moral discernment founded upon that moral anthropology -- for example, **a respect for facts, the sound construction of an argument and an appreciation for its logical validity, and the careful use of language which both describes and prescribes.**

One of the clear points of theoretical separation and distinction among the interactional theorists with regard to moral anthropology is the notion of character. While Haan's empirical studies lead her to be skeptical of an enduring reservoir of moral traits upon which one draws in a given situation, she does grant a limited preferred mode of moral decision-making under certain controlled circumstances. Macmurray's "persistent system of motives" is related to

character, but he is careful to point out that intentions, more susceptible to change with the profile of a given situation than motives, may predict a straying from the persistent system of motives which suggests character. Gustafson, the strongest proponent of character among the three theorists, does not reveal the source of his assertion, indeed, does not attempt a convincing argument for character, but, as we have seen, holds for a "style" or "integrity" in the person which describes the "sort of person" one is.

In choosing a middle course which admittedly weaves among the theorists, we have synthesized this element of our foundational ethic as a "relatively stable individual history" which nonetheless engenders responses which may be "characteristic," but are "open to change, renewal and transformation." While not adhering to traditional terms such as virtues or habits, we do grant that there are some enduring features of a person's moral constitution, some elements of a personal history, which carry over from one situation to the next. These do not predict the moral performance of a person, but describe, in Gustafson's words, "conditions which make possible and likely certain sorts of actions."⁶

The overriding practical importance of the notion of character, though, does not lie in its relative ability to foresee or assure a given course of action for the agent.

⁶ Gustafson, Can Ethics Be Christian?, 47.

In the consideration of a discerner's character or "moral history," the discerner and the minister **attend to the person-as-moral-agent**. That is, while the task of a therapeutic setting, for example, involves recounting and reconstituting the person as a psyche or personality which has emerged from particular genetic and environmental influences and which continues to evolve, the task of pastoral moral discernment involves the recounting and reconstituting the person as a constellation of moral qualities which has emerged in the course of experience, decisions and other uncontrollable factors, and which continues to evolve.

The practical import of "character" for our proposed method of pastoral moral discernment is found precisely in this turn toward the agent. Particularly if an occasion of pastoral moral discernment is prompted by the settling of a question, dilemma or case, but even if the discernment is an ongoing one as we have described above, a requisite base for reflection includes at least some moral portrait of the discerning person and ideally, a portrait of others who are involved in the process or outcome of the discernment. A portion of this depiction of the person-as-moral-agent may come to light, both for the discerner and the minister, in the course of dialogue. But a request on the part of the minister for the discerner to "characterize" himself or herself as a moral agent would seem a directly helpful technique, both for the minister and the agent. With due

delicacy, the minister might inquire about personal history or development, for example, with a view toward the articulation of a constituted, albeit unfinished, picture of person, which has a moral cast to it. One can grant that this self-generated description would be susceptible to prevarications. This is not of paramount concern at this point. The particular attempt to move the discernment away from the issue at hand and toward a probing self-description is guided by the general effort to frame the discernment as a moment in the development of a person⁷ and not only a step in the successful resolution of an issue.

III. Subjectivity, Creativity, and Induction: The Role of the Individual in Discernment

With the affirmation of an historical base for ethics and an underlying multidimensional moral anthropology, an emphasis which heretofore has been minimized in Catholic pastoral settings is placed upon the role of the individual in moral discernment. Although room has been made in Catholic casuistry for "conscience" and the "internal forum," few explanations regarding these subjective considerations have been put forth. As we hope to show

⁷ The most widely recognized spokesperson for the notion of Christian character and its relation to Christian tradition and narrative is Stanley Hauerwas. See, for example, Character and the Christian Life (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1975); Vision and Virtue (Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1975); Truthfulness and Tragedy (with Richard Bondi and David Burrell) (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977); A Community of Character (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

below, in Catholic teaching, and even in the suggested pastoral translation of that teaching, there seems to be a subtle but pervasive distrust of the individual, the particular, the inductive and the imaginative, which is accompanied by a correspondingly ready credence in the collective, the universal, the deductive and the procedural.

Relying upon Haan, Macmurray and Gustafson, we have formulated a foundational ethic which recognizes the significance of these individualistic resources in the process of moral discernment. For Haan, whose theory is perhaps strongest in its affirmation of the dictates of the particular and unrepeatable dynamics of a situation, the solution of a given moral contretemps is bounded by few if any considerations of universal principles or even the relatively fixed moral convictions of the agent(s) involved. Macmurray, too, affirms the notion that the individual subject is capable of authoring satisfactory moral determinations based on the personal resource of "emotional reason." Gustafson's accent upon reading the moral situation by means of imagination, interpretation, possibilities, sensitivities, and empathy likewise suggests an acceptance and even prominence of the subjective, creative and the inductive capacities of the agent in sound moral discernment. What implications are forthcoming from this feature of our foundational ethic for a method of pastoral moral discernment?

First, with special regard for the practical nature of pastoral moral discernment, this ethic suggests that creativity, the special capacity of humans to interpret, design, plan, formulate and produce, will play a critical role in that discernment. We have seen, for example in Haan's theory, that a crucial criterion for adequacy in moral determinations is the simple, disarming question, "Does it work?" Without resorting to an overly instrumental understanding of the adequacy of moral determinations, it does imply that **moral determinations in a pastoral setting should be appropriate to the host of claims to which discerners find themselves subject, and that the act of articulating, prioritizing, adjudicating and acting on those claims will require not merely an analytical but a synthetic, multifaceted and yet singular response, commonly termed "creative."** That we say the same thing of artistic expression, for example, is a further indicator that, like music, sculpture or drama, the moral determination is one which is the fruit of a subjective appropriation, interpretation and representation of the diverse facets of the demands of a situation. Moral discernment is more an art than a science, and as such, it draws upon the aesthetic and sensual, for instance. It is like a great work of art; just as Bach is not Schoenberg and Pollock is not Degas, so the moral determination has a quality which is uniquely responsive to the interior movements of an agent. It is an act of giving birth to the unique expression of movements of

ideas, feelings and perceptions. The role of the pastor in this creative process, then, should be more maieutic than didactic, better depicted as a midwife than a pedagogue.

Second, the grist for such a creative process is that from which art is conceived -- images. It is the imagination which forms visions of truth which in turn shape and execute a particular, concrete expression of the way life is. According to our interactional theorists who put much stock in the importance of subjectivity, and drawing upon the foundational ethic above, we can say of moral discernment that which we have said of art, that imagination is essential. It is a potent force for recapitulating the past, interpreting the present and envisioning the future.⁸ The images may be in the form of symbols, stories or scenarios. They may involve the discerners on the emotional, intellectual or aesthetic levels. They may be the fruit of momentary insights or protensive musings. They may be projected into the past or the future, and as such, they might concern themselves with causes or consequences. Given the essential role of the imagination, the task of the discerners and the pastoral minister is to **generate, elicit,**

⁸ For a classical formulation of the role of imagination in discernment, see Nos. 179-188, The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, Louis J. Puhl, S.J., trans. (Chicago: Loyola University Press) First printing: (Newman Press, 1951).

present and critique images which serve to inform and transform the discernment and, ultimately, the discerner.⁹

Of interest to this discussion of the role of subjectivity and its various forms in moral discernment is Haan's contention, unexplicated prior to this, that a key factor in conducting a dialogue toward equalization is that parties in the balancing process make known to each other their own **self-interests**. Anticipating the fallout from such a bold statement, which upon first hearing seems to run against the grain of most moral theories, Haan notes the specific contribution in this regard which moral psychology might make:

Since theorists have assumed that morality is achieved when self-interest is replaced by interest in others and interest in society, self-interest has not had legitimacy. Since psychologists customarily focus on individual welfare (often to the exclusion of general welfare), their move to investigate morality may cast a different light on the role of self-interest in morality...The dialogue winnows self-interest to decide on the legitimacy or illegitimacy of each participant's claims.¹⁰

Prescinding from the moral philosopher's or theologian's possible and appropriately skeptical question, "How can people know what their true self-interests are?" a question which Haan all but dismisses with the answer, "Whatever they

⁹ Recent contributions to this discussion of the relationship between imagination and Christian ethics include Philip S. Keane, Christian Ethics and Imagination (Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1984) and Craig Dykstra, Vision and Character: A Christian Educator's Alternative To Kohlberg (Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1981).

¹⁰ Haan, et. al., On Moral Grounds, 48-49, 51.

perceive them to be,"¹¹ it seems there is merit to the basic assertion that expressed self-interest in both its legitimate and possibly deluded forms must be an integral part of the discernment process. A moral determination which denies the discerner or other parties the personal autonomy which is due them is no moral determination at all.

It would seem that much violence can be done in the name of dissolving some valid self-interests into a universalized notion of the good or the right. Indeed, the whole thrust of accounting for subjective factors in moral discernment is that extant moral "systems" often fall short in addressing individual persons and situations. But while we easily nod in agreement that an agent's subjective creativity and imagination can contribute to sound moral discernment, we usually stop short of affirming self-interests as important subjective ingredients in the moral determination. Afraid that autonomy too easily degenerates into selfishness, individual development of talents, gifts and perspectives is sacrificed to a generalized but often unexamined notion of the common good.¹²

¹¹ Ibid., 50.

¹² The legitimate inclusion of self-interests in moral discernment is especially germane to the emerging role of women in many cultures. Carol Gilligan's call for more integrated moral vision between the genders entails men taking more seriously the perspective and ideal of relationality and women developing a sense of autonomy. It seems that for Gilligan, what is at stake for women is precisely this issue of subverting the legitimate self-interests of women in creating a cultural "common good." See the last chapter of In a Different Voice.

The practical implication of the importance of self-interest for a method of pastoral moral discernment is relatively straightforward. The tone of the encounter between minister and discerner should be one that encourages the discerner to express self-interests, well grounded or shallow though they might be. As we shall note below, the effectiveness of the process and outcome of the moral dialogue depends upon all parties making known their own perspectives, claims, perceived rights and notions of justice. Inopportune moralizing on the part of the minister could abort the expression of such self-interests, and subterfuge could result.

Finally, as a provisional summary of this section on the implications of the subjective, creative and inductive elements of our foundational ethic, we might look again to Gustafson's category of "the fitting," borrowed from H. Richard Niebuhr,¹³ and developed by Gustafson to refer to a determined moral action which accounts for personal imagination, possibilities, interpretation, sensibilities and faith. The "fitting" is a directly corresponding

¹³ H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self (Harper and Row, New York: 1978), see Chapter One, "The Meaning of Responsibility," especially pp. 60 ff.

See also William C. Spohn, "The Ethics of the Fitting: H. Richard Niebuhr and the American Tradition," an essay delivered September 9, 1988 at a conference at Harvard University celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of Niebuhr's death. Spohn discusses other appropriations of the ethics of the "fitting" by three authors in the American speculative tradition, Jonathan Edwards, William James and John Dewey, and how one might draw from them a fuller appreciation of Niebuhr's notion.

"answer" to Gustafson's guiding question in the moral life, "What is God enabling and requiring in this situation?" It exacts from both the discerner and the minister in pastoral moral discernment a careful attention to all of the subjective interpretations of a situation so that a response or a solution may emerge from the process which respects the unique situation and claims of the moral agent.

IV. A Relational Ethic, A Moral Community: The Role of Social Interaction in Discernment

By now it is clear that we have attached great significance to the dynamics of social interaction as a key to the moral life. Especially in the work of Haan, but also in Macmurray and Gustafson, we have seen that the moral life is fundamentally articulated in terms of the process and aims of the interactions between people. This assertion is implicit in all of the elements of the foundational ethic which we formulated in Chapter Five, but we have restated its special contribution by examining three aspects of it in that section. We will return to those three aspects -- equalizing dialogue, participation and communal context -- in this section as we draw out the practical implications of them for a method of pastoral moral discernment. But first, I wish to make an additional note, appropriately included in this section of this concluding chapter, concerning the connection between the practical significance of relationality and renewal of method in Catholic moral theology.

In Chapter One, we established warrants for the use of empirical science in general and psychology in particular in grounding Catholic moral theology. In doing this, we paved the way for appropriating the insights of the social interactional proposal for the execution of pastoral moral discernment, both in determining a foundational ethic and, now, a critical method for that discernment. We have in all of this confined our thesis to modest claims about the pastoral discernment process in the Catholic tradition, stopping short of drawing out the implications of relationality for theory and method in the larger enterprise of moral theology itself. If we take the present thesis seriously, we can see in the tenets of interactional theory, whether psychological, philosophical or theological, the prospects for continuing the exciting post-Conciliar renewal of moral theology: Simply put, if we attend more to the ways in which the moral life is played out everyday in the "basic unit" of morality -- the relationship -- we can more effectively cultivate a discipline to which believers can lend credence and from which they can receive help in living out the demands of Christian faith. While it is not our purpose to come full circle with the implications of relationality as a foundation for Catholic moral theology, we can point out that such a move from empirical insight to a "morally charged" pastoral practice to moral theology itself could provide a new horizon for moral theology. Following the cues of a theology which is grounded in

reflective, interpreted experience, we can see the suggestion of new method in moral theology, one which seeks the data of pastoral experience prior to the formulation of moral teaching.¹⁴

If the basic form of the moral life for all three of the theorists is relational, and its mediation is dialogue, what are the practical implications for a method of pastoral moral discernment? In affirming the dialectical nature of the moral life, the derivative activity of moral discernment and decision-making is likewise promoted as a **dialogue which occurs in the creative tension between a moral problem, dilemma or decision and its resolution.** Just as a scholar cannot fully know the outcome or sometimes even the shape of his or her thoughts until they are committed to conversation, teaching or print so that they might find an audience which responds to the thoughts with affirmation, nuance and amendment, the discerner looks to dialogue as the form which is also the content of the moral life. In dialogue, the discerner makes real the impulse to reach some "equalization," as Haan would have it. That is, in conversation with another, presumably the pastoral minister, the discerner represents all of the applicable dimensions of

¹⁴ With the formulation of "The Challenge to Peace" and "Economic Justice for All," for example, the United States Bishops have demonstrated that such a method would not be wholly impracticable. The interactional offering and reception of expert and experiential testimony in the formulation of the two teachings, roundly commended as a method in both scholarly and non-scholarly circles, increased credibility and publicity for the documents.

a given "position" and with good faith enters into a dialectic by which the position is affirmed, refined, amended, or challenged by the minister. The premise of the interactional theory of morality is that through such an exchange and its ensuing interpretations and reformulations, a sound discernment may be made. It requires of the minister an equally requisite conviction that a quality resolution may be achieved in the exchange. The basic practical implication of this relational conception, then, is that with due respect for both the subjective soundings of the individual and the incumbent representative role of the minister (see the discussion below on the communal context of pastoral moral discernment), the basic methodological shape of pastoral moral discernment is an intentional dialogue with its aim the achievement of some moral balance by which the discerner and the minister can abide and live.

The value of dialogue as the mode of discernment is especially evident in considering the possibility of self-deception in the pastoral discernment process. By offering to the minister a subjective assessment of a situation, the discerner is able to test the adequacy of that assessment in all of its dimensions. This is why Macmurray has such confidence in his notion of "emotional reason." He can posit the importance of individual value judgments not because they are a flawless source of moral discernment, but because he has already set a foundation of relationality

which stands as a corrective to the faulty value judgment. That is, with the ascendancy of the "I and You" position and the concomitant suspicion of the "I think" position, the clear suggestion is that the dynamic between the "I" and the "you" will have its own valid "winnowing," as Haan calls it, by which self-deception is challenged and corrected.

We have noted, too, that under the rubric of a relational ethic, the most appropriate term for the exchange is **participation**. For Haan, this means that all members of the dialogue contribute in unimpeded fashion. There is free and honest interaction, and none enjoys a veto power over possible outcomes of the dialogue. For Macmurray, "participation" refers to the mode in which a moral agent is in the world -- not as object and observer, but as subject and participant. So, drawing on Haan's and Macmurray's appropriation of the concept of participation, there are certain qualities to the dialogue which will influence the practical shape of pastoral moral discernment -- active agency and unimpeded contribution. The discernor, who must take responsibility for the outcome of the discernment, is not the student or directee of the minister but an agent, an actor, a mover. Consistent with this, **the positions of the discernor must be articulated freely and received by the minister, at least initially, without judgments which promote the "defending" mechanisms and inhibit "coping" mechanisms.**

Gustafson's notion of participation, conceptually combining Haan's and Macmurray's, promotes a model of participative pastoral discernment which has a special focus on the role of the minister. For Gustafson, the role of the minister in a discernment process must be to provide guidance toward a **formation of a consensus**, which stands as both the product and the evidence of a clarification process. Moreover, **the minister**, as we have noted in Chapter Five, **is not an expert by virtue of position or ordination, but one whose interest in the welfare of the discerner(s) makes his or her participation particularly apt and valuable.**¹⁵

But this does not mean that the minister's role in pastoral moral discernment is ultimately reduced to that of a facilitator or animator. In light of the particular **communal context** which prevails, the minister represents truth claims which cannot be diluted in deference to the non-judgmentalism which is helpful to the expression of positions in the dialogue. The three theorists vary on

¹⁵ Gustafson, The Church as Moral Decision-Maker, 130-131. It is interesting to note that this skepticism about the far-reaching expertise of the pastor is specifically mentioned in Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes, No. 43, "The Help Which the Church Strives to Give to Human Activity Through Christians": "From priests [the laity] may look for spiritual light and nourishment. Let the layman not imagine that his pastors are always such experts, that to every problem that arises, however complicated, they can readily give him a concrete solution, or even that such is their mission. Rather, enlightened by Christian wisdom and giving close attention to the teaching authority of the Church, let the layman take on his own distinctive role."

their understanding of the impact of community upon the moral life. While Haan nods toward community with her acknowledgement that obligations, moral growth and rights all come from community, she does not extend the theory. Macmurray, too, makes theoretical room for community in referring to the fact that even as we are apprehending others, they are apprehending us.

It is Gustafson to whom we turn for the explication of the communal aspect of our foundational ethic, as his is the most detailed description of community, it is theological in its concern, and it is directly applicable to the project in this chapter. It is from the significance of the community -- the present locus of God's creating, sustaining, restraining and promoting life -- that the community receives its charges to tend to the ethos of culture, the institutions to which it relates and the quality of the interpersonal relationships within it. It thereby develops certain truth claims in light of its charge which enter into the formation of a moral consensus. But **the role of the minister is to illuminate the truth claims** in the face of the eventualities of life of the community. In considering the practical implications of this for pastoral moral discernment, we can see that this cuts two ways. To "illuminate" is not to assume an authoritarian or intractable position. On the other hand, the minister fails in his or her role if truth claims are not sufficiently illuminated, if truth claims are abandoned by the minister

in the face of opposition simply because they may require difficulty in their realization. The community is ultimately identified by its intentional value, and the minister fails the community if the memory, the wisdom, the teaching, the symbols and the narrative which shape the intentional value are not represented to its members, especially at times of moral crossroads, confusion and crisis. Consequently, in view of the dialogical nature of the discernment, all participants, including the minister, are respected for their unique skills and perspectives in forging a consensus in discernment. But the minister, representing the intentional mission of the community, has the added responsibility of illuminating that which assembled the community in the first place, the realization of God's creating, sustaining, restraining and promoting purposes for life. The ideal encounter is a productive dialogue in the context of an adequate grasp of the claims of the tradition and punctuated with encouragement by the minister to live the appropriated truth.

V. A God-Centered Ethic: Discernment and Christian Belief

John Macmurray has postulated that in the human dynamics of the community alone, one can come to a belief in God by the extension of the experience of an other to an Other. (See Chapter Three) Gustafson, too, has confidence that the dynamics of the community carry a theological significance, that one may encounter in the particulars of

the community the in-breaking of the Universal Creator who is in all of the interdependencies of life. (See Chapter Four) In conjunction with the suggestions of the previous section of this chapter, we can say that the life of the community makes present that which it signifies, faith in God, and Jesus as the unique revelation of God. By this we underscore the importance of interaction, dialogue, conversation, and as Macmurray would have it, the giving and receiving of true, heterocentric, interdependent love of others. But what about "that which it signifies," "that which assembles the community in the first place?"

Presuming and incorporating all of the above practical implications for pastoral moral discernment, what about the role of faith itself in the process of pastoral moral discernment? What are the practical implications of the aspects of faith to which we appealed in forming our foundational ethic: senses of God, a religious context for decision-making, religious symbols and language, the believer's relationship to Christ, and by derivation, the use of scripture and tradition?

The discussion of the discerners' senses of God as we have outlined them above would serve several purposes in pastoral moral discernment. First, the invitation on the part of the minister to the discerners to review his or her "senses" of God is an invitation to confer in a manner more personal than the methods of speculative theology. A "sense" in Gustafson's terms is an affective and subjective

experience of a God who lives in the life of the believer. As such, beginning the content of the discernment with such a request sends the clear signal that a personalized faith in God is the real ground upon which any discernment rests. Second, it is important both for the discerner and the minister that the discerner articulate which specific senses of God are most eminent. That all of these senses may apply in a strict theological sense to the situation at hand goes without saying. But in accounting for the sense or senses of God which are most predominant in the life of the discerner at the outset of the discernment process or in the course of it, the minister and the discerner may receive a glimpse of the general moral disposition and character which faith in God has engendered or could engender in the **discerner**: a person of gratitude, repentance, possibility, and the like. For example, the pervasive sense of God as Giver of All Good Gifts has a different impact on the life of the believer, both historically and in the future, than an overwhelming sense of God as Judge. Again, not only does this locate the discernment firmly in the realm of faith, it also assists the minister in determining the spiritual bearings, the position and disposition, of the discerner. This alone may be a fruitful point of discussion without specific reference to the moral issue at hand.

Recapitulating in another way the first point about the importance of the senses of God, **by grounding the discernment process in personalized faith in God, the**

minister is able to introduce a critical criterion of adequacy for discerning the good or right thing to do, specifically as it is informed by faith: "All things must be related in a manner appropriate to their relations to God." What practical import might this have? While this approach does not enjoy the quality of concrete resolution entailed in a teleological or deontological approach, it does keep before the discernment process an **ultimate frame of reference** which is critical and unique to the pastoral setting and the faith-filled discernment. Indeed, one of the current laments of ethicists is that institutions with limited horizons of value purport to develop their own ethical standards, and so, for example, the corporate culture develops "business ethics," health care professions develop "medical ethics," the communications media develop "media ethics" and the United States Congress, in dealing with its own, reduces the salient issues to sexual conduct and public speaking fees. With no ultimate or even more adequate frame of reference for interpretation, "moral" action takes on the quality of procedural prudence within the given parameters of the institution. As we have noted in developing this feature of our foundational ethic, the relating of things to their relations to God, while carrying with it the attendant difficulties of human lack of omniscience, nonetheless lends to the specifically pastoral discernment process a proper context for consideration. The less-than-ultimate values of family, friendship,

professional advancement or personal freedom, for example, find their true ability to disclose moral determinations when they are posed in relation to God. Without leveling and minimizing all other factors in a sound moral discernment, the minister does well to propose sometime in the course of the discernment process such a standard of faith, perhaps in the form of Gustafson's signature question, "What is God enabling and requiring you to do?"

With the introduction of the senses of God and an ultimate frame of reference for interpreting a situation, we begin to see the role of faith in the moral discernment process. Recall, too, that in formulating our foundational ethic for discernment, we noted that **certain normative factors which are disclosed by religious symbols and religious language would also come into play for the discerning believer.** Again, if such understandings are not articulated by the discerner, the minister does well to listen and probe about specific symbols such as the Christian symbols of Incarnation, Cross, Resurrection, Kingdom of God, and images from parables such as the Prodigal Son or the Good Samaritan; likewise, the religious language of "witness," "discipleship," "grace" or "the redemption of the world" may disclose to the discerner and the minister a purchase on the issue at hand which only religious faith can provide.

We have characterized the "God-centeredness" of the foundational ethic for discernment as a **relationship between**

the believer and God through Jesus Christ. That being the case, we note again the ways that Christ influences the moral discernment process: Christ entails a difference in the believer's disposition, that is, what Gustafson calls the perspective and posture of the believer; Christ effects the intentions of the believer, both for the discernment at hand and for the longer term; and Christ provides moral norms communicated through the message of his life. We have said that the effect of these influences is that Christ serves as a source for moral formation and transformation in the discerner who puts faith in him. **Christ illuminates and empowers a response of the believer to God's grace and call.**¹⁶

We have tentatively suggested that the believer would test the consistency of the intended course of action against his or her own faith in the "Jesus of tradition and scripture." Although this is a central element in the development of a critical method of pastoral moral

¹⁶ With due respect to Gustafson, from whom we draw the basic assertion that Christ illuminates and empowers a moral response on the part of the believer, it can be noted that Gustafson himself seems at best tentative about what "empowers" might mean. We noted in Chapter Four that as is especially evidenced in his later work, Gustafson holds for a relatively "low" christology so that beyond the empowerment which comes from the inspiration of Christ's message, we meet carefully crafted silence about an entitative change in the believer by virtue of Christ's saving action. Niebuhr has the same basic scheme of an ethics of responsibility and fitting action but has the believing agent responding to "the One who heals all our diseases, forgives all our iniquities, saves our lives from destruction, and crowns us with everlasting mercy." (H. Richard Niebuhr, 144-145)

discernment, an extensive explication of what this would practically entail is beyond the scope of our concern here. The "Jesus of tradition" may include such diverse elements as the collective wisdom of the community of believers, the officially articulated truths of the Roman magisterium, and insights wrought from theological reflection, for example. Broaching the believer's notion of the "Jesus of Scripture" and its impact on the discernor or the discernment process could yield a focal point for the discernment process. This is an open field which requires both creativity and methodological rigor on the part of the minister who seeks to prompt such a discussion. Indeed, the minister who wants to raise the level of discourse beyond the discernor's possibly impressionistic reading of scripture and its ensuing moral implications may do well to be versed in thematic and categorical considerations of the integral relationship between scripture and the moral life.¹⁷ In any case, just as the minister conducts a respectful probing of the senses of God, the religious symbols, and religious language to which the discernor might answer in responding to God in faith, so we appropriately, albeit modestly,

¹⁷ Valuable resources in this regard are: Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, eds., Readings in Moral Theology IV: The Use of Scripture in Moral Theology (Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1984); William C. Spohn, What Are They Saying About Scripture and Ethics? (Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1984); Kenneth R. Himes, "Scripture and Ethics: A Review Essay," Biblical Theology Bulletin 15 (April 1985): 65-73; and James M. Gustafson, "The Place of Scripture in Christian Ethics: A Methodological Study," Theology and Christian Ethics (Philadelphia: United Church Press), pp. 121-145.

conclude the proposal for a critical method of pastoral moral discernment. We infer from our foundational ethic that the minister involved in sound moral discernment in a Catholic pastoral setting must probe and incorporate the discerners' relationship to Jesus Christ, encountered especially in the normative sources of tradition and scripture, and recognized as the definitive revelation of God's relationship to us.

**A Study in Contrast:
The "Pastoral Directives" of Humanae Vitae
and An Interactional Ethic and Method
for Pastoral Moral Discernment**

On July 25, 1968, Pope Paul VI issued an encyclical on the regulation of birth entitled Humanae Vitae in which he prohibited the use of artificial birth control means by Roman Catholics. Its issuance prompted an unprecedented response of dissent from nearly every constituency of the Church, but perhaps most vocally among theologians and married laity. Theological reflection of over twenty years on the document itself and the events surrounding its promulgation has yielded key insights about its widespread non-acceptance. While an exhaustive review of that theological reflection is not our purpose here, we do well to review two of those key insights as backdrops to our consideration of a specific part of Humanae Vitae, Section III, "Pastoral Directives."

The responses to Humanae Vitae may be roughly grouped according to two concerns, the "internal" adequacy of the

argument regarding procreative ethics and the "external" argument based upon the authority of the papal magisterium in demanding assent to the document. Many of the objections to the argument itself turned on the magisterium's version of natural law methodology in constructing a case against the use of artificial means of birth control. For example, the magisterium noted that there is an intrinsic connection between the act of sexual intercourse and procreation but then proceeded to create a shaky bridge over a theoretical chasm by insisting "that each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life."¹⁸ This latter assertion represents a strange brand of natural law thinking, preoccupied with an act-mentality biologism, which is more the result of a circumspect deference to Pius XI's Casti Connubii than the dictates of reason. Further, the magisterium did not hesitate to recommend inconsistently that the value of keeping each and every marital act open to the procreation of human life could be preserved by the practice of the rhythm method.¹⁹ This cast yet other doubts on what constitutes "natural" in an argument which purports to be based on natural law.

An equally inciting "argument" for the position against the use of birth control, that which drew a concentrated and

¹⁸ Paul VI, Humanae Vitae, Section 11, in Claudia Carlen, IHM, The Papal Encyclicals 1958-1981 (New York: McGrath Publishing, 1981), 226.

¹⁹ Ibid., Section 16, 227.

prolonged reaction from many ranks within and even outside the Church, was that obedience was due to the document by virtue of the fact that it had been promulgated by the magisterium, which "enjoy[s] a special light of the Holy Spirit in teaching the truth;"²⁰ therefore the members of the magisterium are "constituted...as authentic guardians and interpreters of the whole moral law, not only, that is, of the law of the Gospel but also of the natural law. For the natural law, too, declares the will of God, and its faithful observance is necessary for men's eternal salvation."²¹ Basing his command for compliance on this special light, and the magisterium's authentic guardianship of the natural law, Paul VI affirmed openly the unquestionable competence of the magisterium: "And this, rather than the arguments they put forward, is why you are bound to such obedience."²²

Indeed, the ensuing theological arguments connected the two concerns, making the case in a variety of ways that because of the deficient substance of the presentation against the practice of all forms of artificial birth control, the magisterium failed to maintain a competence, and therefore a credibility, which together would constitute

²⁰ Ibid., Section 28, 231.

²¹ Ibid., Section 4. 224.

²² Ibid., Section 28, 231.

a binding authority over the faithful.²³ The effect on the Church has proved to be a lasting one, and many have averred that the issuance and subsequent rejection of Humanae Vitae have come to represent a watershed in the history of the encyclical tradition in particular and the self-understanding of the Church in general.²⁴

Our special concern with regard to Humanae Vitae is the third major section of the encyclical, "Pastoral Directives." We ask of this encyclical, and particularly of this section, "What is implied by the "pastoral directives" of this teaching which is obviously moral in its tone and content?" The answer to that question may provide clues about an operative though not wholly articulated model of pastoral moral discernment in magisterial teachings, and it may exemplify a broader concern regarding the relationship of "pastoral" to "moral" in official moral teachings and even in the approaches of traditional Catholic moral theology in interpreting these teachings. That is, if in this section the encyclical turns its attention to the real implementation of the moral teaching it proposes, we examine

²³ A typically masterful review of theological reflection on Humanae Vitae is done by Richard McCormick in Notes on Moral Theology 1965-1980 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1981), see especially pp. 233-266, and Notes on Moral Theology 1980-1984 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).

²⁴ Albert R. Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin suggest that Humanae Vitae represents the beginning of the decline of the "centralization of the authority in the moral sphere." See The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 271.

it as an illustration of the problem and lacuna in current Catholic moral theology and practice which we described in the introduction to this thesis. As we hope to show, our proposal offers the prospect of more adequately enlightening pastoral discernment about moral issues. More broadly, though, it points toward the renewal of Catholic moral theology itself through an incorporation of the pastoral setting as a vital source for a moral theology which is in genuine service to the Church.

What, then, is the suggested "pastoral" interpretation of the moral import of Humanae Vitae according to the document itself? Clearly, according to the encyclical, "pastoral" translation, interpretation and implementation are matters of properly teaching and uniformly promulgating a legally-binding doctrine about the duties of marriage and the prohibitions against birth control, and then making merciful allowances for those who cannot abide by the teaching. In the thirteen sections (19-31) devoted to the heading "Pastoral Directives," addressed generally to the observance of the teaching and specifically to various effected constituencies of its audience, the word "law" or a derivation from it is mentioned fourteen times, "teaching" or "doctrine" nine times and some form of "obey" seven times. There are knowing allusions to the "difficulty" and the "burden" which the teaching represents in the lives of married couples, but couples are nonetheless not to "lose heart because of their weakness" in considering those

difficulties. Instead, they are to be comforted by scriptural messages such as "the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life" and "the form of this world is passing away," as well as the spiritual strength of the prayer, the sacrament of the Eucharist, and in the case that "sin still exercises its hold over them," the sacrament of Penance. Moreover, confidence is expressed in the couples that "complete mastery over themselves and their emotions," "self-discipline," "self-denial" and "constan[cy] in their resolution" will triumph over those hardships.

This conception of the pastoral translation of a moral exhortation is witnessed most clearly in Section 28 addressed to priests, the rank-and-file pastoral ministers, who, "by virtue of [their] sacred office act as counselors and spiritual leaders both of individual men and women and of families." The "principal duty" of these pastors is "to spell out clearly and completely the Church's teaching on marriage" and to inculcate by their own example "sincere obedience, inward as well as outward, which is due to the magisterium of the Church." The priests themselves will possess the requisite confidence in spelling out the teaching: "For, as you know, the pastors of the Church enjoy a special light of the Holy Spirit in teaching the truth." (It is not clear as to whether the word "pastors" in this statement refers to the magisterium or the priests. The ambiguity may be intended.) In the following section, priests are also buoyed in their confidence that the Holy

Spirit "illumines from within the hearts of the faithful and invites their assent." Pastors, then, are connected to the magisterium in a subsidiary way. Indeed, the issue of the unconditional competence of the magisterium, which we mentioned previously in relation to the question of magisterial authority, takes on added significance when placed in its context, this section on the duties of pastoral ministers: "And this, rather than the arguments they put forward, is why you are bound to such obedience." Perfect obedience by those pastors leads to perfect univocality of pastoral interpretation, a uniformity which serves the people, who take their moral cues from the pastors:

"Nor will it escape you that if men's peace of soul and the unity of the Christian people are to be preserved, then it is of the utmost importance that in moral as well as in dogmatic theology all should obey the magisterium of the Church and should speak as with one voice."

Finally, after outlining at length this principal moral duty of pastors, and noting for good measure that "it is an outstanding manifestation of charity toward souls to omit nothing from the saving doctrine of Christ," the encyclical grants that all of this univocal teaching in response to magisterial promptings, "must always be joined with tolerance and charity, as Christ Himself showed in His conversations and dealings with men." The recommendation in Section 29, entitled "Christian Compassion," is that the pastor, in imitation of Christ, will not be "bitterly severe toward sin, but patient and abounding in mercy toward

sinners." Revealing perhaps more than was intended, the passage which follows on the heels of this recommendation for mercy toward sinners declares that "husbands and wives, therefore, distressed by reason of the difficulties of their life, must find stamped in the heart and voice of their priest the likeness of the voice and the love of our Redeemer." The use of the word "therefore" at this particular juncture discloses a model of pastoral ministry in moral matters which is primarily concerned with the accurate, unmitigated promulgation of teachings yet which includes as a compensatory compassion toward sinners, those who cannot live up to the moral exhortations of the magisterium. While Christian compassion for sinners on the part of pastors is a critical part of the pastoral ministry of forgiveness, in this critical placement of it as a concern in the pastoral directives for a moral message, it assumes the function of the only possible moral solution short of the enactment of the recommended teaching. By this understanding, the role of the pastor in moral matters is to act as a conduit for the teaching magisterium or to validate and then absolve the culpability of those who fail and thus sin in the realization of that teaching.

In relation to the five-featured foundational ethic for pastoral moral discernment which we developed in Chapter Five, we can see that the underlying ethical framework of Humanae Vitae differs significantly. This has directly influenced the shape of the "Pastoral Directives" of the

encyclical which we have outlined above, and which, with a brief discussion of the contrasting ethical foundations, we now consider in relation to our method of pastoral moral discernment.

While our foundational ethic based upon the interactional theories is grounded in history and historical method, Humanae Vitae embraces a fixed, "classicist" worldview which looks to a biologicistic natural law as the methodological base upon which it builds its argument against the practice of birth control. In Section 10, we find that responsible parenthood is not only a matter of attending to "biological laws that apply to the human person," we are told that these laws are part of the "objective moral order that was established by God." Moreover, this natural law for procreative "faculties" is part of the "order of reality established by God." (Section 16) In addition, this natural law is confluent with the divine moral law, which is promulgated as "the moral doctrine on marriage constantly taught by the magisterium," (S.6) who are the "authentic guardians and interpreters of the whole moral law," (S.4) Unlike our foundational ethic, which seeks moral determinations in the interpretations of discrete events and changing human experiences, the fixed moral order of Humanae Vitae will derive or deduce such moral determinations from the compliances and deviations from the objective moral order, eternally established in the

mind and will of the Creator, and unalterably interpreted by the magisterium.

This basic difference in ethical framework influences the pastoral moral discernment which flows from it. Pastoral moral discernment shaped by the foundational ethic which we have forged above, placing confidence in the experience, growth, development and influences on the agent(s) over time, would tend less toward norms derived from first-order principles, for example, and more toward these dynamic factors as indicative for a determination of a moral course of action. A maxim from which the pastoral minister might proceed could be articulated as the following: **All determined moral actions occur in a continuum of actions and interactions; these determinations possess meaning in the broader context of a developing personal story.**

With specific regard to the practice of the regulation of birth, the minister might pursue questions along the following lines: What is the history of this relationship? How does the familial background of each of the spouses influence the discussion of the morality of birth regulation? What events and situations have had special impact on the moral development of the individual spouses and the marriage? What have been the principal criteria for making common moral discernments in the past? What norms or principles do the couple and the minister count as important in considering the practice of birth control? How

will this determination culminate in practical action? Is the means of birth control significant? Would the couple maintain an ongoing discussion of the decision between themselves and with others if necessary?

The minister who strictly follows the pastoral directives of Humanae Vitae would "discern" with a married couple as to their compliance or culpability in regard to a fixed legal paradigm authored by God, taught by the Church's magisterium, and transmitted by the "line authority" ministers who answer to the magisterium. Discernment at best might mean a "plea bargain" of sorts, whereby exceptions may be made in the name of compassion for sinners who agree to plead to a lesser crime against the objective moral order.

According to our foundational ethic, moral anthropology is multi-dimensional. The human person is an agent who responds to the events of life on numerous levels such as the intellectual and emotional levels. While the person according to this anthropology may have "characteristic" ways of responding, the actual form of the response is open to change, renewal and transformation. If we look to Humanae Vitae we encounter evidence of a different view of the human person. As noted previously, there is a decided biologism, borrowed from Thomas Aquinas and creatively interpreted, by which the human person is morally determined by "biological laws that apply to the human person." (S. 10) Second, there is a patent as well as subtle deference to the

human will as the focal point of moral determinations: Aligning all actions with the "will of the Author of life" (S. 13), the person is exhorted in numerous places to "resolutely obey," "observe," "strive" and "persevere" in the commands of that will, and "acquire mastery over [them]selves..." through self-discipline. (S. 21) Moreover, this sheer willfulness is to be exercised in order to express love which is "fully human," and "not merely...a question of natural instinct or emotional drive." Having not explained the meaning of the terms "natural instinct" and "emotional drive," we can only point out a general skepticism in the document regarding the contributions of dimensions of the human person other than the will, and the "aid of reason" (S. 21) which informs the will.

Again, we can predict the contrasting contours of methods of pastoral moral discernment which are predicated on these different moral anthropologies. In our relational understanding, the human person is rightly considered in many aspects, including the emotions, the senses and intuitions, the intellectual capacity for reasonable analysis and the enduring moral traits which have been termed "character." Once again, an operative maxim: **Mature moral agency consists of a plurality of personal strengths, including rational understanding and critical distance from the situation, emotional health and sensitivity in the forms of compassion and empathy, as well as the ability to enact a moral resolution.** Pastoral moral discernment about birth

control will consciously attend to those aspects in an individual and a couple. Representative questions by the minister might include: What is the couple's understanding of the issue at hand? Why is it an issue at all? Can they appreciate the intellectual integrity of arguments for and against the practice of birth regulation? How would they characterize the emotional health of their relationship, and what effect would children have upon it? Would the practice affect the spouses' "character?"²⁵ What emotional difficulties would they anticipate in the practice or forgoing of birth control? How do they sense God in the creation and sustenance of their own marriage and family? What is the couple's attitude toward the authority of the Church in this or other matters? Do they feel bound to follow the teaching on birth regulation? What practical resolutions need to be made so that the moral determination could be realized?

With the moral anthropology of Humanae Vitae, pastoral discernment will more closely concern itself with will-compelling rational arguments based on the consistency of an action in relation to the objective moral commands of the natural and divine law. Aspects of the human person other than will and reason -- "emotional drives" and "natural

²⁵ For an excellent treatment of the connection between "character" and the procreative ethics of Humanae Vitae, see Jeremiah J. McCarthy, "A Discernment Model for the Ethics of Birth Control: An Application of a Narrative Method With Critical Observations," PhD dissertation, Graduate Theological Union, 1985.

instincts," for example -- will be regarded as untrustworthy gauges of moral capacities and therefore relative disvalues in pastoral moral discernment.

Remaining consistent with the affirmation of history and a multivalent moral anthropology, our foundational ethic allows ample room for the subjective, creative and inductive judgments of the agent in the course of moral discernment. Central to this emphasis is the use of subjective images, vision and symbols, and a premium is placed upon "fitting" action which is practically tailored to the moral demands of the situation. One of the guiding criteria for such subjective discernment is the question, "What is God enabling and requiring me to do in this situation?" The individual is able to take a reading and make an interpretation in response to that question. A pastoral axiom reflecting such considerations might be formulated as follows: **Moral agency entails the capacities to entertain symbolic interpretive frameworks for discussing an intended action, to imagine alternative courses of action which correspond to the demands of the situation, and to envision consequences of various actions.** Questions the minister might profitably pose include: Is there a governing image in the individual lives of the spouses or the collective life of the couple by which they see marital love and parenthood? How does the practice of birth regulation fit or fail to fit the image? Do they have a sense of a symbolic meaning of sexuality, over and against, for

example, a deontological understanding of it? What consequences does the couple envision for alternative courses of action, and can the couple formulate tailored practical responses to the various consequences?

Suffice it to say for our purposes that in Humanae Vitae there are virtually no allusions to the individual's capacity to read or interpret a situation and subsequently determine a moral action. In one scant reference to a subjective discernment in Section 10 on "Responsible Parenthood," the encyclical grants that responsible parenthood is exercised by those who,

With regard to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions...prudently and generously decide to have more children, and by those, who, for serious reason and with due respect to moral precepts, decide not to have additional children for either a certain or an indefinite period of time.

But true responsible parenthood, the message continues, "has one further essential aspect of paramount importance," involving the "objective moral order which was established by God, and of which a right conscience is the true interpreter." So, the argument continues,

...they are not free to act as they choose in the service of transmitting life, as if it were wholly up to them to decide what is the right course to follow. On the contrary, they are bound to insure that what they do corresponds to the will of God the Creator.

The challenge, then, for the pastoral minister in our proposed method of pastoral moral discernment is a maieutic one of eliciting from the discerners the applicable and guiding creative images, symbols and visions which make for

fitting and responsible moral action. The challenge, or "principal duty" for the pastoral minister according to the "Pastoral Directives" of Humanae Vitae is a didactic one of "spelling out clearly and completely the Church's teaching on marriage."

If there is one central feature of the foundational ethic which we have determined from the interactional sources, it is the the social and relational nature of morality. Starting with Haan's thesis and complementing it with Macmurray's and Gustafson's contributions, we have asserted that with due respect to the social nature of the human person, all moral action must be discerned through some form of communally participative dialogue in which God's enablings and requirings may come to be known. Formulated as a pastoral guideline, we could state: **Moral agents both offer and receive values through discourse. Within this interactive process with another agent or a community, values are appropriated, developed, nuanced or rejected. For the Christian moral agent, such communal discourse is a means of developing a response to the question, "What is God enabling and requiring me to do?"** Attending to this guideline, the pastoral minister may be concerned with the following questions in a couple's discernment about birth regulation: Has the couple discussed the practice of birth regulation? What is the outcome of that dialogue? What are the present communal attachments of the couple? Do they consider them important

in the discernment of this issue? Have they had any experience of grace within the context of relationships and/or the Christian community? Do the spouses conceive of their own families, former or intended, as communities? For the purposes of discernment, do they have a conversational partner who is a worthy representative of the Christian tradition as it is articulated in biblical and magisterial sources, for example?

Again, virtually no provision is made in Humanae Vitae for such an interactional understanding of the moral life. Although as we have seen, the priest acts as "counselor and spiritual leader both of individual men and women and of families," that counseling and leading is quickly specified as teaching and then further qualified as filled with compassion for sinners.

The difference in the method of pastoral care derived from these disparate notions is again obvious. According to the interactional method, the pastoral minister acts as the promoter of and participant in an interchange which includes communal truth claims. Yet, it has as its term a consensual resolution. The basic stance of the pastoral minister in the view of Humanae Vitae is that of an active guardian of doctrine who passes along truth to a passive, inquiring faithful. There is more at issue here than the style of communication in pastoral assistance with moral discernment. Woven into Humanae Vitae's description of the role of pastoral minister is a fundamental distrust of persons in an

"equalizing" dialogue reaching a truly moral determination which respects Church teaching and the position of the discerning individual or couple.

Finally, our foundational ethic asserts that the moral response of the believing Christian is centered on a relationship to God in Christ, with the dispositions, interpretations of experience and normative considerations of the believer's moral response shaped by a commitment to "relate all things to their proper relations to God." This God-centered moral response is illuminated and empowered as the believer looks to Jesus Christ as the definitive revelation of God. Again, succinctly stated: **The Christian moral agent appropriates meaning by incorporating his or her story in the broader message of the Christian narrative.** Lest the couple's discernment regarding birth control be conducted outside of the realm of particular and personal faith, the minister might inquire along the following lines: Can the spouses articulate this and other moral turning points as a continuation of the story of Jesus and the ensuing Christian tradition? Do they have any personal experience of transformation or empowerment through the healing or forgiveness revealed by God in Christ? How do they see their own intended family life as a Christian vocation or form of discipleship?

In contrast, if the basic thrust of Humanae Vitae may be at all termed an effort to "relate things to their proper relations to God," the effort is that all things must be

related to the immutable moral law of God, uniquely interpreted and promulgated by the magisterium, in keeping with the truth that

...Jesus Christ, when He communicated His divine power to Peter and the other Apostles and sent them to teach all nations His commandments, constituted them as the authentic guardians and interpreters of the whole moral law, not only, that is, of the law of the Gospel but also of the natural law.²⁶

Again, we see the pervasive presence of the legal/pedagogical paradigm. One's relationship to God is equated with one's relationship to God's law, and the role of Jesus Christ as the definitive revelation of God is narrowed to Jesus' teaching authority in bearing that revelation.

By our proposed method of pastoral moral discernment, the charge to make all discernment God-centered through Jesus Christ includes the forming and transforming of the dispositions, the experience and normative considerations of the moral agent through a variety of Scriptural sources and genres, as well as Christian tradition conceived as official magisterial teachings, but also communal worship and wisdom. It is understood that the God-centered formation and transformation of the agent is affected in a number of different ways by diverse means. By contrast, Humanae Vitae suggests a pastoral moral discernment which would restrict its purview to Scriptural sources and genres favoring the commands of God and the authoritative teachings of them by

²⁶ Paul VI, Humanae Vitae, Section 4, 224.

Jesus, and to Church tradition characterized as official, legal or at least customary, and instructional.

With such a contrast, we conclude. The subtitle for this thesis is accurately posed with its first word -- "toward." What we have done in these past two chapters by developing a foundational ethic and a critical method for pastoral moral discernment grounded in an interactional perspective is ultimately to suggest a new direction for Roman Catholic pastoral practice in regard to moral matters. Certainly more can be done to refine that suggestion for pastoral action. Beyond that call for further study and proposition, the assertions of our interactional foundational ethic, along with their practical implementation in the pastoral setting, also imply a new direction for Catholic moral theology itself. With due respect for the contributions of the interactional perspective as it is articulated in the underestimated empirical reflection on experience found in moral psychology and the traditional sources of philosophy and theology, Catholic moral theology may discover a rich source for formulating a theology of moral experience which is faithful to God in Christ and respectful of a relational understanding of the human person.

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